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H RING OF SHIELD

KNOX
MAGEE

1. Fiction, American
2. St. Bri. — Hist. — Richard
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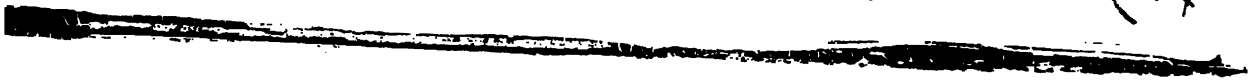

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Knox Magee.

WITH RING OF SHIELD

"On he came, and, to my great surprise and pleasure, struck he my shield with the sharp point of his lance.

"Ah! my brave sons, ye all do know the pleasure 'tis when, with ring of shield, ye are informed an enemy hath come to do ye battle."

BY KNOX MAGEE
Illustrated by F. A. CARTER

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With Ring of Shield

WITH RING OF SHIELD

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With Ring of Shield

CHAPTER I

SIR FREDERICK HARLESTON

In these days, when the air is filled with the irritating, peevish sounds of chattering gossips, which tell of naught but the scandals of a court, where Queens are as faithless as are their lives brief, methinks it will not be amiss for me to tell a story of more martial days, when gossips told of armies marching and great battles fought, with pointed lance, and with the bright swords' flash, and with the lusty ring of shield.

Now, my friend Harleston doth contend, that peace and quiet, without the disturbing clamour of war's dread alarms, do help to improve the mind, and thus the power of thought is added unto. This, I doubt not, is correct in the cases of some men; but there are others, to whom peace and quiet do but bring a lack of their appreciation. I grant that to such a mind as Harleston's, peaceful and undisturbed meditation are the fields in which they love to stroll, and pluck, with tender

hand, and thought-bowed head, the most beautiful and most rare of flowers: but then, such even-balanced brains as his are few and far between; and even he, so fond of thought and study, did love to dash, with levelled lance and waving plumes, against the best opponent, and hurl him from his saddle.

And there is Michael, which ever thinks the same as do myself, and longs for fresh obstacles to lay his mighty hand upon and crush, as he would a reed.

It is of those bygone days of struggle and deep intrigue that I now shall write. I do hope that some of ye—my sons and grandsons—may, after I am laid to rest, have some worthy obstacles to overcome, in order that ye may the better enjoy your happiness when it is allotted unto you. Still do I pray, with my old heart's truest earnestness, that no one of my blood may have as great trials as I went through; but in which I had the noble assistance and sympathy of the best friends ever man was blest with. I shall now tell of my meeting with the first of these, and later in the tale I shall tell ye of the other.

I, Walter Bradley, then a faithful servant of his Majesty King Edward IV, was sitting one evening in my room at the palace of the aforesaid King, at Windsor, engaged in the examination of some of mine arms, to make sure that my servants had put them all in proper order for our

expedition into Scotland, with the King's brother, the Duke of Gloucester. A knock came at my door and, upon opening, I beheld Lord Hastings, then the Chancellor of the Kingdom, and at his side a gentleman which I had not before seen. This stranger was a man of splendid physique, about mine own height; long, light brown, waving hair; blue eyes, that looked me fairly in mine own; sharp features; and yet, with all his look of unbending will, and proud bearing, he had a kindly expression in his honest eyes.

"This is my young friend, Sir Frederick Harleston, just now arrived from Calais," said Hastings, as they both entered at mine invitation, and he introduced us to each other.

The Chancellor stayed but until he got our conversation running freely, and then he spoke of some business of state that did demand his immediate attention, and left us to become better acquainted.

Of course the expedition into Scotland was the chiefest subject of our conversation; and I learned from Harleston that he too did intend accompanying the Duke, as the King had that day granted him the desired permission.

"And what kind of man is Duke Richard?" asked my new acquaintance, when we had at length discussed the other leaders of our forces.

"Hast thou never seen him?"

"Ay, I have seen him, though I am unknown

to him; but I mean what kind of man is he inwardly, not physically?"

"As for that, I do not care to speak. Thou, no doubt, hast heard of some of his Royal Highness' acts; men must be judged but by their acts, and not by the opinions of such an one as I," I replied cautiously; for I hesitated to express mine own opinion—the which, in this case, was not the most favourable—to one which I had but just met. Remember, my dears, those were times in which a silent tongue lived longer than did a loose one.

Harleston's color heightened, but with a smile, he said:—"Thou art in the right. 'Twas impertinent of me to ask thee, who know me not, a question of that sort. I had forgot that this is England, and not Calais; for there we discuss, freely, the King, as though he were but a plain man."

The frankness of this man, together with his polite and gentlemanly speech, made me to feel ashamed of my caution, so I said:—"Duke Richard hath never been popular with the friends of her Majesty the Queen; though of late he hath made himself liked better by them, than he was for many a long day."

"But he is a valiant soldier, is he not?"

"Ay, verily, that he is. He is as brave as the lions upon his banner, and besides, he knoweth well the properest way in which to distribute his forces in the field. There it is that the good qual-

ities of Richard do show up like stars in a deep, dark sky."

"Then the sky is truly black?" asked Sir Frederick, with a smile.

I could not help but laugh at the way I had at last unconsciously expressed mine opinion of the Duke, after having declined to do so, but a breathing-space before. I cared not now that I had spoken my mind of Richard; for the more I looked into the honest face before me, the more did I trust to his discretion.

Then our conversation changed to the gossip of the court, of which I told him all. The only part of this in which he showed interest was when I spoke of the King's health.

"I fear," said he, "that his Majesty's reign is nearing an untimely end. When a man hath lived the life that the noble Edward hath, and kept up, with unbated vigor, his licentious habits, even when his body hath broken down, it doth take but little to blow the candle out. Some morning we shall awaken to find that Edward IV is dead, and his infant son is our new king."

"Yes, that is what we must soon expect, for kings must die as well as subjects; especially, as thou most wisely saidst, kings which insist upon living a life of three score and ten years in a trifle more than two score."

"And then God help poor England," said my new acquaintance devoutly.

"Why dost thou take such a pessimistic view of the situation in case of King Edward's death?" I asked; for the solemn manner in which Harleston had last spoken strangely thrilled me.

He regarded me thoughtfully whilst one might, with leisure, tell a score, ere he did answer my question; then he said:—"It hath ever been a rule of mine, as it evidently is of yours, to not speak mine opinions unto strangers; but on the contrary to let the other party speak his mind most freely. I have found this plan to be of exceeding worth in enabling me to gather most useful information, without a payment in return."

I felt my face flush red, and I was about to express, in no mild speech, mine opinion of his action in thus obtaining from me all the information that I did possess, and then, when I did ask him to explain the meaning of his own remarks, to thus answer me.

He took no notice of my movement or look, but continued speaking in that same quiet voice, that never did seem to be disturbed by passion, and yet had in it something of a force that ever made it to command attention.

"Many years have I spent in France, and therefore a stranger have I come to look on as a foreigner. Now that I am returned again unto my native land methinks that I will let my judgment take the place of mine old rule, and speak out freely to those whom I take to be honest. Thee

do I place in this class, which I do regret is very small."

I was prodigiously surprised that a stranger would thus speak unto me as though I were some disinterested outsider of whom he was speaking. Again did I flush up and commence to attire myself in my dignity; but Harleston's honest and inoffensive look of candor did again disarm me, and he continued, uninterrupted, with his speech.

"For several years have I been acquainted with my Lord Hastings, whilst he was the governor of Calais. From him did I learn much of the situation here; but never did he speak of the characters of those in power; for Hastings, though a proper man, is still a politician and, as such, must keep his opinions to himself. It is a pleasure to me then to be permitted to thus discuss the probabilities of England's future with one not bound by the bonds of policy."

I bowed, and he continued:—

"So far as I can see, if the King dies ere the Prince of Wales be old enough to take full charge of the government, the people shall be obliged to choose a protector to rule in the young king's stead, until such time as the child doth come unto years of proper judgment."

"True," I assented.

"Do then but cast thine eye over the congregation of eager applicants for this seat of power, and thou shalt behold one whose advantage over

the others doth raise him to a vast height above their heads, and consequently his chances of success in this great competition are assured; that one can be no other than Richard, Duke of Gloucester."

"Ay, truly, there is no other with sufficient power to rule England, in case the King should die."

"Now if Gloucester doth come thus into power will he not desire to have his revenge upon those which have ever been his enemies?"

"'Tis like he will."

"And will not this lead to uprisings throughout the land? Yea," he continued, "we have had one example of the troubles, and bloody wars brought about through the King dying and leaving a child to grasp with its weakly hands the sceptre and the sword of chastisement. Pray God we do not have another, and yet I fear that it will be unavoidable. I have expressed mine own poor opinion, without its being prejudiced by any others' thoughts; see whether I shall be right or wrong."

Now such a view of that which might soon happen had never been taken by me; and yet I had spent several years at court, and thought myself well acquainted with all the intrigues and possibilities of court life. And here was a young man—in fact not older than myself—which had never in his life lived at court, prophesying as to

what the future would bring forth. His words were indeed bold, and yet I could not deny that they were reasonable, and liable to be fulfilled.

I now did admire this handsome and thoughtful stranger, and therefore methought it a duty put upon me to give him some warning that might serve to keep that well-shaped head, for a little longer space, upon its broad, square shoulders. I therefore said:—

"Thine opinions, I have a fear, stand in some likelihood of being proven true; yet do I pray with my full heart that they may be wrong. However, whether thou art right or wrong—the which time will prove—let me now warn thee, which art a stranger here, to keep those thoughts to thyself. There are those about this place—the more's the pity—whose shoulders are not bent by the weight of honor they carry, but from their habit of holding their ears to the keyhole."

"Thanks for thy kind intent," he replied. "After I have had some little experience at court I do hope that I may acquire the habit of smiling whilst, with my dagger, I kill my partner in the conversation. This, I have heard, is the fashion of the Duke of Gloucester; and if I do prove a true prophet all good courtiers must soon adopt it."

That night as Harleston was leaving my room I promised to see him early in the morning, and show him through the castle and parks.

As we shook hands at the door I felt as though I had known him for long, and that we had ever been the best of friends.

That, my dears, was how I became acquainted with Sir Frederick Harleston, who, since that day, hath ever been close by my side, through many harsh experiences, as well as through many sunny days of happiness.

Now we are sailing, side by side, down the mighty river, travelled by all wearing the fleshly habit. The great unknown sea of oblivion is now near at hand, and soon we shall both cross the bar and sail forth upon its smooth and peaceful surface.

But there I go passing over sixty years as lightly as a swallow doth skim the bosom of smooth waters. And indeed the waters o'er which I am skimming are not smooth, but rough and troubled. Come, come, Sir Walter, settle down and tell the tale of days before your hair had lost its raven hue. My head, as ye all know, is now well capped with snow; but yet the head itself doth still retain a deal of its wonted fire.

CHAPTER II

THE MAIDENS

THE next morning after Harleston had come unto my rooms I called at his apartments to see how he did like the way that he had been placed. I found him in the act of completing his toilet, and therefore, as he had not broken his fast, I invited him to come and breakfast with me; which invitation he did readily accept.

During our meal he asked me many questions as to the manner in which people conducted themselves at court, to which questions I gave him very complete answers, so that he might be able to manage without any breach of etiquette, which thing to do, at Edward's court, was not so easy as one might imagine.

"Now, in regard to your ladies," said he, "do they insist upon being worshiped, as do the ones of France, or are they cold and chilling, as are the fogs of mine almost forgotten native land?"

"Thou shalt have an opportunity for the satisfying of thyself as to that same, to-day; for I am about to take thee with me to see two of England's fairest primroses; the one, my cousin, Lady

Mary Atherby, to whose tender care I will leave thee, and the other, Lady Hazel Woodville, to whose mercy I do entrust my soul—if she be pleased to take the present at my hands."

"Do these ladies live at court?"

"Yes," I replied. "They are both ladies-in-waiting to the Queen. And now, having done all the damage we can to the present repast, what dost thou say to a stroll through the park, where we are like to meet the ladies, and there satisfy thy curiosity as to their dispositions?"

"With all my heart," said he. "I have never been known to be elsewhere than in the front rank in such an attack, though ever do I meet with a repulse."

We then strolled forth into the park, and wandered through the walks, among the grand old trees, for some time, without meeting anyone.

"I fear that we are not destined to fall in with the enemy," said Harleston, after we had walked in silence for some time.

"Fear not," I replied; "we shall soon commence the encounter; for there, unless mine eyes do deceive me, is the first sign of danger."

"Thou meanest that fair outpost yonder, where those two oaks do meet above the path?"

"The same," I replied; "but it now looketh as though there are others there before us."

While this conversation was going on we had gradually approached a bench, placed behind a

clump of bushes, through which we saw some fair, fresh, faces, watching our approach. Upon the bench, and talking with the girls, were two men, in which, as we drew closer, I recognized the Duke of Gloucester and the Duke of Buckingham. Richard was dressed—as was his wont—in the extreme of fashion and in the richest of materials. Buckingham, though not so showily attired, was magnificently dressed in black, figured velvet, with dark maroon facings.

After saluting the Prince, the ladies, and Buckingham, I introduced my new friend to them all. I then said unto his Royal Highness—"Sir Frederick, here, hath but yesterday been made a brother officer, by his Majesty."

"Yes," said Harleston, "the King did command me to report to your Royal Highness for service with thee in your expedition into Scotland."

"Much am I joyed, Sir Frederick, to have thy noble assistance in our chastisement of the insolent Scot: for England can ill afford to spare any brave knight from her expeditions, now that they have become so thinned out by our late, unhappy wars," said the Prince, with that heartiness he so well could use, and of which he knew the power.

"But let me warn ye both," he continued, with a mock gravity and a quick glance at the maidens, "that ye shall have short time in which to enjoy

the pleasures of the court; for we march next week. Therefore make the most of your opportunities."

Buckingham, who ever smiled, but said little, though he was no mean orator, merely agreed with the Prince's remark, and with a pleasant bow they left us, the limping Prince leaning on the arm of Buckingham.

"Thank God!" I cried, with a sigh, when the two were out of earshot.

"Is he not most disrespectful?" laughed Hazel, as she turned to Harleston.

"Nay, of that I cannot judge, fair lady," replied he, with a smile. "The customs of the court I have yet before me to master. 'Tis possible that ere I have been here a week I will commend Sir Walter's act."

"Indeed thou shalt," cried both of the girls at once.

"Oh! those two are simply unbearable," said Hazel with a force that left no doubt as to her opinion. But then she hath ever been one which feared not to express her dislikes, and they are ever as passionate as are her likes.

"And so, Sir Frederick, thou hast come all the way from France merely for the pleasure of marching off to battle and slaughtering poor Scotchmen, or of being killed thyself?" said gentle cousin Mary. "Alas, when will ever you men learn that there are other things to live for,

in which there is more glory, far, than in the cruel wars and slaughters."

Both Hazel and I did laugh at the little maid for the solemn way in which she said this; but Harleston did not smile, and on the contrary listened with attention. Mary without noticing us continued—"Look at Lord Rivers and behold what he hath accomplished: introduced printing, and by that one act hath done more real good for England than if he had won the greatest of all battles."

"I quite agree with thee, Lady Mary," Sir Frederick replied; "but battles are also necessary, in order that our homes and country may be protected, and that we may be permitted to enjoy those luxuries such as is the one which Lord Rivers hath taken the pains to introduce."

"Mayhap thou art right; I never looked at it in that way before; but still I do not like them," said Mary, wrinkling her little forehead, and shaking her pretty head in the most bewitching way, and causing some little golden curls to dance and lightly kiss her cheeks. I could tell by the look on Harleston's face, that he did envy those curls their position. And who would not? Had ye but seen Mary at that time, ye should have been changed from freemen into Mary's slave, and that quite freely, that is, had the Lady Hazel not been there: for had she been ye would love the one on which your eyes first fell.

Whilst the afore-put-down conversation was taking place we had been walking slowly through the park; and now Hazel and I began, gradually, to drop behind. Of course we had naught whatever to do with this; it must have been that Harleston and Mary did quicken their pace.

"What dost thou think of my new friend?" I asked, when they were out of ear-shot.

"Quite an acquisition to the court," Hazel replied. "Indeed 'tis time we had another handsome gentleman at court," (here my chest did begin to swell, and at least two inches were added unto my stature, which did not need it;) "besides the King," she added.

Since that day I have had the greatest sympathy with Lucifer. Verily, I never fell from such a height before, nor since. I have been thrown from my horse in battle, and had hundreds ride over me, yet have I felt better than I did that morning in the park. I stopped and stared at her, with my mouth open, like a bumpkin gazing at an army passing.

Now at that time (and I say it without conceit) there were few men at court who would not have been glad to change their looks with Walter Bradley; therefore the blow did fall with more stunning force. When I had somewhat recovered myself, I walked on, wishing every woman at the bottom of the sea, and swearing revenge on her, which was now walking by my side; yet cursing

myself, silently, for having made a fool of myself by showing my surprise. Hazel, instead of laughing, which would have made me feel better, wore the most innocent look that it is possible to imagine: yet methought the look was overdone. However, I was now determined not to show my disappointment any more; so I continued the conversation, using the same subject.

"I do not believe Harleston need fear the Scottish arrows; for, unless I be a false prophet, he will leave the most vital part of his body, namely, the heart, here at Windsor. And yet," I continued, becoming bolder, and heaving a heavy sigh, "he shall not be the only one to do so."

"No," she replied; "the Duke of Gloucester said he was leaving his heart here."

"To whom said he that?" cried I, for the one danger of this accursed court life was the chance of men in high places casting a jealous eye on the maidens of the court.

"I heard him tell the Queen that he would leave his heart with the King and his family," answered Hazel, and she laughed at my apprehension of the danger which I thought threatened her.

"Why dost thou like to torment me so?" I asked.

"Because thou art so easily teased."

Why, oh why, did the Creator arm these fair

creatures with such a power to make us happy or miserable, good or bad, send us to Heaven or to Hell, make us sensible men or the veriest of fools as best doth please their whims?

"But look, here cometh the Queen," said my fair companion. "I fear I shall get a scolding for leaving her, to walk with thee."

"Tell her that the Duke of Gloucester kept thee talking with him, the which is the truth," I said.

But when we met her Majesty, who was walking with her daughters and some others of her suite, she most kindly did receive us, and no thoughts of scolding were in her gracious mind. When we had spoken for some time, the Queen enquired as to where Mary was.

"She came on ahead of us, your Majesty," replied I, "and I had surely thought that thou must have met her."

"Do thou go, Hazel dear, and when thou hast found her, tell her that I wish to speak to her."

Hazel courtesied, I bowed, and we passed on, searching for Mary and Harleston.

"The Queen is the best mistress that any servant could wish for," said Hazel, when we had gone a few paces. "She is never angry, and so kind; she treats both Mary and me as though we were her own daughters."

I did not wonder that the Queen did use them

both so well; for who could help loving either of those dear, dainty maidens?

We had not gone far ere we met Mary and Harleston returning.

"They seem to be getting on famously," observed Hazel; "for they are so preoccupied that they do not see us coming."

When they came near, Mary, who had evidently been listening with great attention to something that Harleston was telling to her, burst forth into her rippling, childlike laugh. Then, as she caught sight of us, she stopped suddenly and said:—

"Oh, here they come now!" Then, as we met them:—"We thought that ye must have turned back; so we were just coming to search for you."

"And what has Sir Frederick been telling thee that was so amusing?" I asked.

"Oh!" replied Harleston, "the Lady Mary hath been completing mine education, which thou, Sir Walter, didst start last night, and then I, in order to, in some small way, repay part of the debt, was telling her some of the stories that I had heard in France, where indeed they are most expert in story-telling, though not so accomplished with regard to the truth."

Here Hazel delivered the Queen's message, and we all started back to the Palace, laughing and chattering, like nothing more than school children. Upon reaching the castle I found some

orders from Duke Richard, the fulfillment of which did keep me busy for the remainder of the day.

The next few days, Harleston and I spent in making ready for the march; so we did not see much of the ladies. However, the morning before we left Windsor, we met them in the park, whither we had gone in search of them. When they beheld us, they came forward to meet us, and methought that Hazel did not look as happy as was her wont; but it may have been that I was hoping to see her look sorrowful, and therefore, I did imagine it.

"We have come to receive the benediction," said Sir Frederick.

"And also a charm that will give unto us both charmed lives," I laughingly put in.

"Indeed thou needst not to laugh, Walter," said Mary, solemnly, and with reproof in her tone and manner. "I know that thou dost not believe in such things, and therefore they are worthless to thee; for in order to be protected by these mysterious benefactors, one must have unquestioned faith in their ability to protect. Now, Sir Frederick," she continued, with a slight hesitation, "if thou art not so skeptical as Walter there, and if thou wilt promise to keep it safe, and not to lose it, I will lend thee a charm that will indeed protect thee from all harm. I always have it with me, and nothing hath ever harmed me."

"'Twould truly be a fiendish fate which could send harm unto one so fair," said he. Then, as she did hand unto him, the charm (which was a scarf of scarlet silk, and had been given to her by her father, who had obtained it from a Turk,) he thanked her, and placing his hand over his heart, he swore to protect it as he would his life, and never to permit a thought of doubt, as to its ability to protect, to cross his mind.

"Wilt thou not give unto me a charm that I may take with me, Lady Hazel?" I asked, coaxingly, when we had gone some little way.

"Thou dost not believe in them, and therefore, as Mary doth say, it would do thee no good," she replied, with a toss of her pretty head, as much as to say, "Now, thou wouldst be skeptical."

"Do but give it me, and I do hereby swear to trust in it, and no doubt as to its virtues shall ever cross my mind; yes, this do I swear by all the saints of paradise." Now this did I consider an exceeding fine speech, and therefore I was not prepared for the reception that it did receive, which was a burst of laughter, and clapping of the hands from Hazel.

"Excellent! excellent!" laughed she; "Oh, Sir Walter, thou hast missed thy calling; thou wouldst have made such a splendid priest; thou saidst those words with such a religious tone, and looked so saintly. "Then, as I showed my disappointment and annoyance, "Come, come," she

added, "do not sulk; here is my glove, which I do now command to protect thee through all the dangers of this war. Now, am I not kind to thee?"

I nearly went wild with delight. I kissed that glove so fondly that Hazel had to warn me not to eat it, as it would not protect me if I did. And then I said a lot of things which all my male readers either have said or are only awaiting an opportunity to say. Presently I was interrupted in my avowals by coming suddenly upon Harleston and Mary, who were sitting on a bench beside the path.

"Is Sir Frederick telling thee some more stories, Mary?" asked Hazel, when we saw them.

"Not the kind I heard Walter telling thee, just now," replied Mary, as she looked at me, with a wicked little smile playing over her fair features. Then, as I reddened to the ears, both Harleston and Mary burst out a-laughing, and I, after stammering out some explanation about some messages I was leaving with Hazel, to deliver to the Queen, —which set them laughing louder than ever, thought it best to keep quiet.

However, as we were bidding good-by to the girls, Hazel said something that made me to forget mine embarrassment. It was just as we were leaving them that she called me back and said, as she kept her eyes staring fixedly at the ground:— "Remember, Walter, I think a great deal of that

same glove, and do not want any harm to come to it; therefore try and keep it out of danger."

"Oh, fear not; I now do know that I shall return again." And ere she could prevent me I seized her hand and kissed it.

I went back to my rooms with my toes scarce touching the ground.

Our time was now but short; and soon we did mount our horses and set out in the train of the Duke of Gloucester, on our march to Scotland, and had soon left the castle behind.

However, so long as we could see the left wing, we watched two scarfs waving, to which we waved our lances in return.

And so we rode off to the wars.

CHAPTER III

A FIRST BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY

Now I will not weary ye, my children, with a description of our march unto Scotland, as it was a wearisome one, without any adventures which might have relieved the tediousness of so long a journey. Indeed there was nought for us to do, but march all day, and when night did come, thank Heaven that we could forget our weariness in well earned rest and sleep.

At almost every town along the line of march we were joined by reinforcements; so, by the time we neared the border, we had an army strong enough to take a considerable fortress. However, as we did approach nigh unto Berwick, which place was the object of our attack, we learned that it should require all of our forces to subdue so formidable a stronghold. When within a few miles of this place, that hath been so many times the scene of struggle between our nation and our ever irritating neighbours of the North, and which, some score of years before, had been turned over unto our enemies, by that gentle and weak-minded King Henry VI, Duke Richard of Gloucester, on this, his second expedition unto

this place—his first having miscarried—sent unto the garrison a messenger, under a flag of truce, to demand the surrender of Berwick, unto the army of its rightful owner. Whilst he was gone, the army went into camp; for although it was still early in the day, our leader had decided, in case the Scots did refuse to surrender—which, in all probability, would be their reply—that we were not to begin the attack until the morrow, in order that his army might have an opportunity to rest after their long, hard, march.

Oh, such a delightful evening did follow that long and weary day of labour. We were among that magnificent border scenery, where nature doth seem so busy with her work of carving herself into most fantastic, and yet admirable, ruggedness. How, in the evening, doth she cast her beauteous, drooping, eye aslant across her work; and her gentle breath dies out in hushed and satisfied, yet modest, admiration. The setting sun did seem to paint a hill, then step a vale and touch another with its golden brush.

Here may be seen many a place where nature's liquid emery hath ground the rocks asunder, and still some sparkling remnant goes trickling down the groove.

On this evening Harleston and I did take our usual walk through the camp and, as the night was glorious, it did tempt us to stray further from headquarters than might be considered safe. In

fact, past the outposts did we go, and sat us down upon a hill that had seemed bolder than its comrades, so that we might the better see the surrounding country.

As we sat there, our backs were turned towards the camp, and our faces were tinted with the fading colors of the western sky. To right and left were hills and hollows of varying height and depth, but all having in common, shrubs and trees in unfailing irregularity, growing side by side, above and beneath each other, in the same disorder as had their seeds been flung there by the hand of the hurrying angel which did sow the whole of the earth's broad face. At our feet, and betwixt us and the sister to the hill on which we now were seated, was a smooth and undeceiving mirror, set, with bashful caution, between these obscuring hills, that nature's pardonable vanity might not with ease be gazed upon by the ignorant eye of man.

"I wonder when we shall be back at Windsor," said Sir Frederick, in a gentle tone, after we had sat in silence for some time, gazing at the soul-inspiring sight.

"Surely thou art not beginning to be homesick?" I asked; for this was the first time that I had heard my companion speak of the castle, since we had left it.

"Oh, no," he replied, "yet I wish that I might be there," and with this methought he did sigh.

Now, Heaven knows, no man could have wished to be in Windsor more than did I at that moment: yet, I had not liked to say so, for fear Harleston might think that I did relish the lazy life at court, more than I did that of the camp. But now that he had broken the ice it was the one subject on which I wished to talk.

"Well, Sir Frederick, and what dost thou think of her, now that thou hast had time to well consider?" I asked, coming out boldly.

"She is indeed perfection," he replied. And then, as though to himself:—"Eyes like the sky's deep and unfathomable blue, and hair like nothing more earthy than a sun-reflecting piece of well polished gold."

"Nay, not so; her hair is dark, and her eyes are hazel as her name," said I, in surprise;—and then, after staring at each other for a moment, we both did see our mistakes, and burst out a-laughing.

So Harleston and I sat talking on a subject that was very dear to us, until we did hear the bugles calling, which warned us that it was time to return and retire. We arose and started down the hill, and back to camp, both feeling in musing, more than talking, mood. We had not gone far, however, when my companion called my attention to something behind a clump of bushes, glistening in the moonlight.

"If I am not mistaken, there is danger yonder;

for if ever I did see the glisten of a headpiece, I see it now. We had better put that hill between us and the enemy, if such they be, for, without our armour, a doublet doth afford but faint resistance to the steel head of an arrow."

We at once started to cross the low hill that Harleston did refer to. We had just reached the top, when two or three arrows struck the rocks at out feet.

"A good shot, for the distance, upon mine honour," cried Sir Frederick, as we leapt down behind the shelter of the friendly hill. We ran quickly along the ravine in the direction of the camp, but Harleston, suddenly stopping, said:— "Suppose we see from whom we are running, before we do go any further. If they be but a few archers or men-at-arms, two good knights should drive the rascals before them as doth the wind the crisp, dry leaves; ay, though we wear not our full armour. What dost thou say, Bradley, shall we try conclusions with them?"

Readily did I consent to the adventure; for never in my life have I been known to require a second invitation of this sort. We concealed ourselves behind some shrubs, and there we awaited our pursuers. Presently we beheld them approaching at a run; and, as they neared our hiding place, we could see what we should have to face. They were three men, armed with swords such as are used by the Scotch, and which they do

manage more after the fashion of a club, than any other weapon one could compare their use with. Their bows they had evidently thrown aside, for their empty quivers still hung at their sides. However, they also carried a small, round shield, and this did give them an advantage over us, who had nothing but our good swords with which to protect ourselves. When they came near the place where we were concealed they stopped and held a short consultation.

"I saw them stop about this place," said one.

"No, methinks they went further on," said another.

"Well, we had better search here anyway," added the third, "for it will not be safe for us to venture much more close unto the outposts."

And then they did commence to search the shrubbery all around us. Nearer did they draw to where we waited, swords in hands. Presently one came and thrust his sword into the bushes behind which we were hiding. That was the last thrust he ever made. I was upon him in a moment, and buried my sword up to its hilt in the fellow's chest. He sank to the ground, but as he did so he uttered a gurgling yell, the which did bring his companions unto that spot.

"Now, Harleston, we shall have some sport," I cried out, as I did engage with the first of these new arrivals. My friend quickly met the other, and we fell to in a lively fashion. I soon forced

my man to give ground, despite the difficulty I found in getting past his shield.

" Now, my brave Scot, I have thee in the right place," said I, as I prepared to give him his quietus. Then, just as I did step forward, to run the knave through, my foot slipped on one of those accursed stones, and I sat down as nicely as I could have done in mine own rooms at the castle. The fellow aimed a savage blow at my head, but, dropping the point of my sword to the ground and raising the hilt, I caught the stroke upon it. Then, reaching swiftly forward, I grasped him by the ankle and hurled him to the ground. Ere he could move I was upon him and, seizing his own dagger, I stabbed him to the heart.

When I had done for my man I turned to see how my friend was progressing with his. They were still at it for dear life and Sir Frederick did seem to be bothered with the way the Scotchman used the little shield. This fellow was much larger and more thick of frame than the one with which I had been engaged, and did seem to be giving Harleston all he could do to hold his ground. Still would I not interfere, for well did I know that my friend would rather die than have assistance when fighting against a single foe. At length the Scotchman made a swinging, back-hand stroke, full at Sir Frederick's neck. It was a savage blow, and I did greatly fear me that I had lost a good comrade. Harleston, however,

dropped quickly to one knee, and as his opponent's blade whistled harmlessly over his head he plunged his sword into his adversary's side.

"Well done!" cried I. "A pretty piece of work, upon my soul, was that fall of thine."

"I see that thou hast settled with thy man," said he; "but this one did compel me to use mine artifice."

With this we took their swords, as remembrances of this night's work, and walked slowly back to camp, glad at having been the first to draw blood, and for having found something to relieve the monotony, after our long and tedious journey.

When we reached camp we learned that the messenger had returned with an answer from the Scots, which message was evidently a refusal to comply with the Duke's demand; for we did at once receive orders to be in readiness to commence the attack at sunrise.

When we retired, Frederick and I occupied—as was our wont—the same tent; and the last thing I heard, as I fell into a peaceful sleep, was the sounds of the anvils of the armourers, as they worked, getting everything ready for a day of battle.

CHAPTER IV

THE TAKING OF BERWICK

THE next morning, just as day was breaking, we were aroused by our squires, who, after bringing us our breakfasts, of which we ate heartily, got our armour and laid it out and ready. So soon as we had finished with our repast, we were buckled and laced into our harness, and then, as everything was ready for the march, we did set forth.

We had not travelled above a mile when our advance guard sent us word that a strong force of the enemy was coming towards us, evidently with the intention of attacking our right flank. This was the part of the army in which Harleston and I were to play our part; we having been sent there with a body of other knights to add somewhat to its strength, the which was somewhat weak in comparison with the left wing, which was led by the Duke of Albany, who was a brother of the Scottish King, James, against whom he was now about to fight—but then, royal brothers are ever longing to kill each other.

As we came over the brow of a hill we could see a considerable body of knights and men-at-

arms, preceded by a stronger force of archers, coming slowly towards us, as the messenger had said.

Our archers were now thrown out in front, the knights followed, and the men-at-arms brought up the rear. As we were drawing near unto the foe we beheld their main body advancing on our centre, which was led by the Duke of Gloucester himself. Soon we were engaged, and then we had not time to see how the Duke did receive the Scotchmen; for indeed we were too busy with the receiving of them, or rather their arrows, which poured down on either side like rain.

When this long distance battle had gone on for a short space we thought it time that we knights should take part, and not let all of the glory go to the archers. Therefore, the command was given to swing to the right, past them, and take the enemy in the flank. Around, as on a hinge, swung the double ranks of mail-clad figures, and then, when we had cleared our archers, we placed our lances in the rests, and came down upon the enemy like a thunderbolt. They, however, had seen us change position, and, though they be thick-skulled knaves, they did divine our object, ere our plan was carried out. Their knights dashed forward at the same time as did we, and we met before their archers with a crash that was heard for the distance of a mile.

I had singled out a knight, which, by his size,

and the way he sat his horse, led me to think he should be a foeman worthy of my steel. In this I was not disappointed; for when we met in the front rank, each had aimed at the centre of the other's shield, and it is seldom that I have ever had so heavy a shock. Both our lances flew into a thousand pieces, as though they had been made of straw. Mine opponent's horse was forced back upon his haunches, and he was like to lose his seat. But he did recover himself with such dexterity as did show him to be a knight of great ability. I had scarce time in which to draw my sword ere he was upon me, hacking at my head so rapidly as to take all my time, and the use of all my knowledge, in defending myself. Round and round we rode, striking furiously at each other, which blows we guarded with equal quickness. Neither had any advantage, as we seemed to be both of nearly equal strength and skill. After forcing him closely he at length began to give ground, though whether from necessity or guile I do not know. I aimed a terrible blow at his head; he caught it upon the hilt of his sword. The force of the blow was so great that my weapon was broken in two, and I was unarmed. Verily I thought mine end had come, and that I should never see the Lady Hazel again. To my surprise the knight called out, in French, something to the effect that we should meet again, and rode off.

"Both our lances flew into a thousand pieces."—*Page 40.*

"That accounts for it," said I; "he is a Frenchman; and had he been a Scotchman, I had now been a corpse."

The enemy was now commencing to give way in places; yet the fight was still a goodly one.

Sir Frederick was nowhere to be seen; so I quickly secured a sword from a poor knight, who had still the head and part of the shaft of a lance sticking in his side, and then did I plunge into the fight once more. I forced my way through a struggling crowd of the enemies' foot soldiers, cutting them down as I went; when suddenly I espied a knight on foot, surrounded by a score or more of these rascals.

"To the rescue!" cried I, and dashed into the circle. The knight was standing beside his horse, which was dead, and making great strokes with his sword, in all directions. Thus he had kept a circle clear around him. Several corpses in that deadly circle told why the rest stood back. But, just as I came up, one of the knaves did venture to make a dash forward, when the brave champion's head was turned. I was upon him in an instant. "Ha! thou coward ruffian, take that!" I cried, as, with a straight downward stroke, I cleft his head from top to chin. Just then some of our men-at-arms came up, and the few Scots which escaped us did so by their fleetness of foot, and their knowledge of the country's many hiding-places.

"Thou art not too soon," said Harleston, for it was he, as he opened his visor and wiped his brow. "Indeed I was hard pressed by that pack of hyenas."

I quickly secured a horse for my friend, and again we plunged into the thick of the fight. We soon became engaged with three knights which were like to have done for us, had not,—when we were sorely pressed—an arrow struck one of their horses, causing it to fall. The rider fell with his leg underneath, and so was unable to take any further part in the fight. I pressed my opponent from the first, and soon had him at my mercy. I gave him an opportunity to surrender, but as he refused to do so, I waited until his arm was raised for a blow, when, with my shield held over my head, I drove my sword straight under his arm, where the armour divides. I heard my point strike his harness on the other side, as it went through his body, so great was the force of the blow.

Hot and furious was now the fight. The enemy were fleeing in all directions, and our gallant troops were pressing them full hard. Loud blew the trumpets, the signal for the continuance of the slaughter. Berwick itself must now be carried whilst our blood was still at fever heat. I looked around to see how fared my friend, in his contest with the knight with whom I had seen him engaged. No sight could I see of either of

them; but there was Harleston's horse straying riderless about the field. I recognized it by the peculiarity of its housing. A great sadness did then possess me, for I did greatly fear that my dear friend must have fallen at the hand of his opponent. "Indeed he must be dead," said I; "else how could his steed be riderless?" Then did I swear a great and savage oath of vengeance. "For his life an hundred Scots shall die, and still shall he be but poorly paid for." Thus did I think; for during the short time in which I had known Sir Frederick I had learned to love this noble knight, better far than I would a brother.

Our forces came on, eager to avenge the loss of their comrades which had fallen that day, and these amounted to a considerable number. Now and then a small body of the foe were driven to bay, and seldom were they spared. I seemed to be changed into a demon, with the thirst for blood. Every one of the enemy that did fall into my hands, I slaughtered, and felt a savage delight in doing it. Ah! the fierce delirium of victory.

When we reached the walls of Berwick a white flag was flying from the Citadel; so the battle was over, and we were stopped from pursuing the fleeing foe. Berwick was taken, and the war was ended; though we did not know this latter at that time. That evening we took possession of the fortress, and the flag of England replaced that of the Scots.

After I had had my quarters allotted to me, and was just getting out of mine armour, who should walk into my room but my dear friend. He was still in his complete harness, and was covered with sand and blood, from head to foot.

"The saints be praised that thou art still alive!" cried I, as I rushed and grasped him by the hand. "I was sure thou must be dead, and many a poor Scot has paid dearly for my thought. But where, in the name of Heaven, hast thou been rolling?"

"Do but wait a moment and I will tell thee all," he replied. Then, when we were seated, he told me what had happened him. "You saw that knight, with whom I did engage when the three attacked us?" he asked.

I nodded, and he went on:—"He is a Frenchman, and he hath a knack of breaking his opponent's sword with the hilt of his own. He broke mine, as I aimed a blow at his head; but, before he could strike, I closed with him, and, putting mine arms around his waist, I threw myself from my horse and dragged him with me. Of course he fell on top, which shook me up a little and, as the ground was soaked with blood, I naturally do not look so clean as I might."

"And what about the Frenchman?" I asked; "didst thou kill him?"

"Oh, no," he replied, "he struck his head heavily on the ground, and as he was badly

stunned, I took off his helmet to see what he did look like, and also to give the poor devil some air, which I was in much need of myself. He was a handsome man, and evidently he belongs unto a wealthy house; for his armour was richly inlaid with gold."

I then told Harleston of my encounter with the same knight earlier in the day, and when he had heard that the Frenchman had spared my life, he was glad that he had not given him his *coup de grace.*

The next morning, as we were dressing, a knock came at our door, and, upon opening it, a soldier handed unto me a message which, upon reading, I found to be an order from the Duke of Gloucester to prepare myself for a journey, and to report to him in an hour's time. I at once guessed my destination, which I thought to be Windsor; and in this I was not mistaken; for, on presenting myself at his Royal Highness' quarters, I was handed a packet and commanded to reach the castle in the shortest possible time. I then asked the Duke if Harleston might accompany me. He thought for a moment ere he answered, and then said:—"Yes, by Saint Paul, take the whole army, and thou wilt! we do not need them here; these Scotchmen will not dare to draw a sword, after the lesson we taught them yesterday, eh! Bradley?" and he slapped me on the shoulder. Of course I agreed with his Royal

Highness, which is ever the proper thing to do, when dealing with a Prince.

Half an hour later Harleston and I were on our way to Windsor.

"Not so long a campaign as we had thought," said I, when we were fairly on the road.

"No," he replied; "my dream of last night is being now fulfilled."

And so we rode on, with our faces turned southward.

CHAPTER V

FROM BERWICK TO WINDSOR

On this ride from Berwick to Windsor we had but one adventure to break the monotony of our journey, and that was of so little importance that I will not describe it at any great length. It was as we were nearing York, and passing through a great forest which lines that road on either side, like two great rustic walls placed there to screen Nature's lowliest children from the murderous hand of man, for a considerable distance, that we were attacked by a band of highwaymen, with which this forest doth abound. Indeed 'tis said that here they do grow upon the trees like poisonous fruit. We had been riding hard all day, and, as the evening was drawing nigh, we were walking our horses, in order to give them a rest in the cool of the forest, ere we should make our final effort, for that day, and dash into York at a gallop. Suddenly, about five score yards in front of us, two horsemen did ride out, one on each side of the great road, with drawn swords in their hands. They started to come in our direction, so we thought they meant mischief. Then two more followed, and these were dressed as were the first.

We now became convinced that we were the attraction which seemed to be drawing these gentlemen of the greenwood. I glanced over my shoulder, and there, about the same distance behind us as were the others in front, were four more men, dressed in exactly the same manner and also carrying their swords in their hands.

"We are in for a skirmish now," said I.

"Yes," replied Harleston; "but if we be careful we can do for them yet. If they do attempt to stop us, cut down the one on the right, and I will do the same on the left, then dash forward and see if we cannot pass the others. The ones behind we need not bother with. However, use great caution and do not show signs of resistance too early in the game."

"I'll watch thee for the signal."

When the first two men were within a few paces of us, they suddenly wheeled their horses straight across the road, thus compelling us to stop.

"And what might you want, sirs?" asked Harleston, in his sweetest tone. The manner in which he spoke did seem to take their breath away; for they did nothing but stare for a moment. Then the first to recover himself answered:—

"All that thou hast, and be damned quick about the giving it." This in a voice that told, in the plainest terms, the life these fellows lead.

My companion fumbled with his purse for a

moment, which example I followed. The two knaves eyed the bags as the wolf doth gaze in greedy admiration at a lamb. Then, when the outlaws were off their guards, our swords did leap from their scabbards, and we cleft their heads as though they had been made of putty—which, mayhap, they were. We now drove our spurs into the flanks of our horses and dashed at the other two. They waited until we were within a score of yards of them, and then they changed their minds, and did not seem to relish the idea of meeting the same fate as their fellows; for they turned their horses into the greenwood, and disappeared along one of those many narrow paths, with which these forests are burrowed, and which they know as well as I do the corridors of the palaces at Westminster or Windsor. We did not attempt to follow them, but rode on at full speed for the distance of a mile, and when we at length slackened our pace and looked back, not one of the six was to be seen.

They had evidently thought to overawe us by a great show of numbers and the copious use of bluster; but after two of their number had fallen the courage of the rest did forsake them, and they lost their appetites for our purses, for which they should have to pay such a price.

So we rode into York, nothing the worse for our little adventure which had helped to make us forget the weariness of our long, hard ride.

When we had entered our inn, and were pre-

paring us for our supper, a great crowd gathered about the door; for the news had soon leaked out, who we were and what our business was; for around inns every one doth know one's business better than that person does himself; for what they do not know they guess at. So we gave them the news of the great victory our army had won, and told them that the Duke of Gloucester now occupied Berwick. When they heard this they went wild with delight, and we had to shut ourselves in our rooms to keep from being carried, on their shoulders, all over the city; so great was the admiration of this sturdy, simple, congregation of England's stalwart sons.

Bonfires were lighted wherever they could find sufficient open space in which to build them. Processions were continually marching through the streets, singing and cheering.

We had intended staying here for a few hours, in order that we might get some much needed sleep; but we soon found this to be outside the bounds of possibility, on account of the uproar which was increasing every moment.

My friend and I, after cursing our folly in telling them the good news, decided to not wait for a longer time than should be necessary for us to get some supper and a change of horses, and then proceed on our journey.

Needless to say, we did eat ravenously, after the long ride we had had. When we had refreshed

ourselves, all that it was possible for us to do, we mounted our horses and set out through the surging, screaming, half-drunken mass of humanity and made our way slowly towards the city gates.

One drunken fellow, which did recognize us as being the persons who had brought the good news, caught my horse by the head and insisted upon our joining him in a friendly bowl at a near by inn. When I tried to persuade him to let me go, and to excuse the duty that did make our presence with him impossible, he said:—

"No, by the Virgin, your Royal Highness shall not pass out of the old city of your father without drinking with some of its citizens. Were his Royal Highness, thy father, alive he would not pass out till he had made the whole town drunk, and so shall not you. Stay and revel with us, for this is a glorious day for England,—glorious day," and he did lean his head against the neck of my horse, and seemed inclined to spend the night thus.

I spurred my steed sharply and, as he bounded forward, the poor tradesman was thrown to the ground; but as we rode on we could still hear him calling out to "his Royal Highness," so long as he could make himself heard above the uproar that was going on around us. He evidently thought that I was the Duke of Gloucester, and he was most determined to show his patriotism

and loyalty, by giving us what he considered a glorious time.

We were permitted to pass through the gates, when we had told our business; and so we rode forth from the city and on to the moon-lit road, upon a long night's ride, through alternate wood and open country.

All that long night we rode on, now dozing in our saddles, and then waking with a start, when an owl would break the stillness of the forest with his unearthly noise, which seemed to us to be in keeping with bats, serpents, brimstone, and all the general sounds of Hades, more than the peaceful quiet of our weary ride through the forest. Then, after cursing all these hideous disturbers, we would spur our horses on, and let the cool breezes, as they played against our faces and whistled past our ears and through our hair, refresh us and help to drive away those heavy veils that did seem ever to be settling down upon our brains and blotting out our consciousness with their soothing folds.

The wolves, as they howled in the distance, seemed to be humming some unearthly lullaby, in keeping with the scene and with our feelings; and so weird-sweet did it sound that we would surely have gone to sleep, had not our horses, which had better sense than their riders, quickened their paces at each of these, to us, melodious outbursts. How we kept our seats that night hath ever

since been, to me, a mystery; for I have but scant recollection of that agonizing ride from York.

When we entered Northampton, early the next day (for this was the road we came), we had to be lifted from our saddles, so stiff were we, after that awful night. Here we did refresh ourselves with wine and food, and had about an hour's sleep. Then we were rubbed with strong waters, the which did greatly refresh us, and then, mounting our seventh pair of horses, we did set out for Windsor.

We stopped but twice before we reached our destination, and then only whilst we could get some refreshments and changes of horses.

We reached Windsor that evening, and were so exhausted that we had to be assisted into the palace, and to the King's apartments. When I saw the King, however, I remembered my mission, and this did seem to revive me; for I rushed forward and, dropping to one knee, presented the Duke of Gloucester's message to his Majesty. So soon as we had entered the room Harleston, regardless of etiquette, flung himself into a chair and was sound asleep almost the instant that he touched it. When I had handed the packet unto the King my duty was done and I had no ambition to support me further. Mine ears did ring; the room began to whirl all around me; weights then did seem to hang upon my weary eyelids; my head sank lower; and there, at the King's feet, I fell into a heavy sleep.

CHAPTER VI

THE KING'S GIFTS

WHEN I awoke I was in mine own sleeping room, undressed and in bed. My servant was standing by my bedside. The sun was shining into my room, and it was evidently well on in the day. I had to think for some moments before I could tell where I was. Then it all came to me like a flash of light. I remembered that terrible ride; kneeling at the King's feet, and from that moment everything was a blank.

I asked my servant what hour it was.

"Upon the stroke of three, sir," he replied.

"Is Sir Frederick Harleston yet stirring?"

"I think not, sir."

"Go call him, and ask him to breakfast with me, in my sitting room."

I dressed myself as quickly as my stiff limbs would permit, and soon Sir Frederick joined me at breakfast.

Whilst we were yet at our meal a page brought us word that the King did desire to see us in his apartments. We hastily followed the messenger and soon found ourselves in the presence of his Majesty, who did receive us most cordially.

"Ah! my dear Bradley, I hope thou hast quite

recovered from the effects of thy journey." Then, looking at Harleston, he said:— "And thou, Sir Frederick, art not so sleep-weary as thou wast yesterday e'en? By the saints, we thought that ye both were done for! Ye would not even keep from dreamland for the sake of a flagon of wine. Truly, ye were greatly exhausted; and no small wonder, when one doth take into account the time ye made."

We bowed respectfully, in acknowledgment of this compliment, and he continued:—

"I hope that ye will now give me a description of the battle; for my brother doth send me the result only."

After we had described the battle, as well as might be, the King, with a complimentary expression of his thanks for our services, gave unto Harleston and me each a suit of the best of Spanish armour, richly inlaid with gold. I had seen the King wear suits like these, and I did guess that they were his Majesty's own. This surmise proved to be correct, for, as we hastened to thank him for his magnificent gift, he said:—

"I know that you will not prize them the less when ye learn that both of those suits have been worn by us."

We could not thank his Grace sufficiently for this marked favor: nor did he want our expressions of gratitude; for he stopped us with a wave of his hand:—

"No more, no more, I pray," said he. "The only thing that I do wish you to do is promise me that, in case anything should happen me, ye will ever be as true and faithful to my son, which is now Prince of Wales, as ye have been to me. Stand by him through his youth, and should any one—no matter who—wrong him, I wish ye now to swear to do all in your power to avenge his wrongs. Now, gentlemen, are ye willing to do this for your King?"

So there we swore, on the cross of his sword, to do that which the King had asked of us; and when we bowed ourselves out of the royal presence and went in search of the girls the thought, furthest from our minds was that we should ever be called upon to fulfil our oaths made to our King that day.

Suddenly, as we were making our way slowly through the halls, Harleston quickened his pace and, without one word, left me, and hastened forward, almost at a run.

"I hope that our hard ride hath not turned my dear friend's mind," thought I, as I hurried after him. But when I turned a corner in the corridor I learned the reason of his haste. There, a few paces down the hall, and retreating from me, but with Frederick gaining rapidly upon them, were Hazel and Mary, walking arm in arm, unconscious of their pursuers—for by this time they had two. I reached them almost as soon as did

Harleston, so great was my anxiety lest I should be considered negligent in finding them. When the maidens, hearing the hasty steps behind them, turned and beheld us, both did utter little screams of surprise. Then Mary quickly recovered herself and said:—

"Oh, dear Cousin Walter, I am so glad to see thee safe returned." And then, as though less concerned, "And thee, Sir Frederick. I hope thou hast come through the journey well, even though thou didst not have one of those grand campaigns that you so glory in."

I left it to him to explain to her that we did have one of those glorious "campaigns," of which she so sarcastically spoke; for I did turn to greet the dearest maid which ever drew the breath of life.

"Walter, I am glad that thou hast returned safe," said she, after I had told her when we did arrive, and how we came to be returned before the others. "Thou knowest,"—although I did not—"I had such a fearful dream about thee."

"Almost a confession," thought I.

"Methought I saw thee attacked by foes hidden in ambush, and thou wert fighting desperately for thy life. Then, in battle, I saw thee struggling against fearful odds, and then you seemed to be unarmed, and at the mercy of your foes. But in this dream I did awake to find myself in a tremble of excitement, and glad that it was but

Harleston, so great was my anxiety lest I should be considered negligent in finding them. When the maidens, hearing the hasty steps behind them, turned and beheld us, both did utter little screams of surprise. Then Mary quickly recovered herself and said:—

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a dream. Yet it did trouble me, not to see what became of thee when thou wert in these great dangers; for I feared that mine awakening, ere I did see that which did happen, meant that thou wert killed."

"Well, Lady Hazel, thy dreams were true. Verily some angel did show unto thee the adventures I went through. Joyed am I, too, that thou wert kept in ignorance of my fate; for then thou hadst not been so pleased to see me now. And wert thou greatly troubled when thou didst see me beset by dangers?" And I drew a trifle closer unto her side.

"Art anxious to know?"

"Ay, Ay, so anxious, Lady Hazel," and I seized her pretty hand. She drew it quickly from my grasp, and motioned with her head in the direction of Mary and Harleston.

"Well, then," she said gently, "I was greatly troubled, for I knew not whether thou hadst been killed or no; and if thou wert dead I should then greatly miss one of my best friends," and her dark and beauteous eyes drooped, and she did seem to be greatly engaged in examining her dainty little slipper, as it nervously tapped the floor, and tempted me to drop on my knees and kiss that pretty foot. I was on the point of dropping on my knee and telling her how I did worship her, when I did hear Mary titter behind me as though she had read my thought. It had ever

been my misfortune to have someone, or something, prevent me from taking advantage of a golden opportunity, such as was this, when it did present itself.

Then Mary and Harleston strolled off down the corridor, and I thought I should have another chance to complete the story I had started so well that morning, some weeks before, in the park. But it was too late. My tongue would not put into words the thoughts that I was dying to express. So I cursed myself for a dumb idiot, and was compelled to postpone my declarations until Erato saw fit to untie my stammering tongue.

Hazel seemed amused at mine annoyance, and laughed and blushed in my gloomy face.

We strolled on and into the library and, as the others were there, we sat and talked and told the girls all about the campaign and our little adventures and our ride from Berwick, and then they did tell us everything that had happened at court whilst we were away, and which is generally known as court gossip and, as it could not interest you, my dears, I will not put it down.

"See, I did not lose the charm thou gavest me when I left," I said, as I drew it from its hiding-place, over my heart.

She noticed the locality in which it had been carried, and her color heightened as I coolly put it back in its place, after I had let her see it.

"Art not going to return it?" she asked in a

tone which assured me that she did not wish me to.

"Oh! no, I cannot tell what dangers may yet beset me; so I must keep it still, that I may come safely through."

To this she raised no objection; so it stayed there till another day, of which I will tell ye later.

Now I think I hear some one say, as he doth read these lines:— "Was he not simple, not to see that Hazel loved him?" To this I reply in advance, by reminding him to look back over his own experience—if he hath been so fortunate as to have had one—and try to recall how he did act, under the same trying circumstances. Then, if his memory will be as fresh as is mine, he will remember the times when he was almost sure that his lady loved him; yet, was there not a most tormenting uncertainty, and a doubt that he might be over confident, and so, by speaking too soon, he feared he might lose all? This I know was mine experience, and I preferred, like a general with an uncertain force, to wait until I should find some traitor within the strong fortress that I was to take, and so make sure of victory by one short, quick stroke. I now felt that I was winning over part of her garrison; still did I prefer to make still more certain that I was not deceiving myself with false hope.

Nor you, ye ones which have yet to experi-

ence this most perplexing, and yet most delightful of engagements, be not too hasty in your judgment of one—not the least distinguished of your house—for when ye are placed in the position in which he here found himself, if you do not feel, or act, any more foolish than did I, ye may congratulate yourselves for having conducted the enterprise in the most advantageous manner. However, in this case—but there, I am getting ahead of my story.

When I look back from the mountain of peace and happiness, upon which I am now sitting, and across the vale of years gone by, to that other, sun-topped hill of youth, I do not regret that I am no longer young. For in that valley, which separates the mountains, I see dark clouds, and storms, and armies marching and engaged in deadly contest. I hear the cheers of the living intermingled with the prayers and curses of the dying. Foul murders are being committed; dark plots being laid and executed by those which struggle in that dark and troubled valley. And through all this do I see that same group of young people, struggling with the rest. Another and grand soul hath been added unto their number; and their united trials seem, to my old eyes, to rank first in importance. Then, on the near side, those dark and heavy vapors, with which the depression is filled, are torn asunder by the united

force of a giant arm betwixt two flashing swords, and the five walk out and take their seats upon this glorious hill, which is the goal of all; and yet, which so few do reach, whilst wearing the fleshly garment.

CHAPTER VII

THE BALL AT THE CASTLE

ABOUT a week after our return to Windsor I learned that there was to be a grand ball given by the King, in honor of our victory over the Scots. I at once found the girls and told them the good news.

"Ah!" cried Hazel; "will it not be delightful to be able to have some life at court, after all this quiet and monotony, with every one away and no music, but that which Mary and I do make for ourselves?" And she clapped her hands, and smiled and courtesied to me, as though I were her partner in the dance.

"Not a great compliment to me, nor to Sir Frederick neither, when thou dost say there is no one at court," said I; for I did not altogether relish Hazel's superabundance of delight at the prospect of the change. But the dear one was in one of those teasing fits of hers; so I knew full well it was useless to say much.

The only answer she did vouchsafe to my remark was a provoking little toss of her pretty head. She looked so lovely as she skipped about the room, that even an over-exacting lover could

not help but be good-natured; even though he did try to be otherwise.

Mary was equally joyed when she heard that we were to have the dance.

"But when is it to be?" asked Hazel, stopping suddenly in the midst of her solitary performance and joining Mary and me.

"This day week, and the Duke of Gloucester and most of the court will have returned by then; so we will have a lively time. But here doth come Sir Frederick; so, Mary, thou hadst better inform him and give him the first chance to pick out his dances." Mary blushed; but however, she did go and meet Harleston, at which both Hazel and I laughed heartily.

Indeed it was a goodly sight to see those two standing side by side; the one tall, handsome, and built in the mould of a slightly reduced Hercules; and the other, small, dainty, and lovely, as a sweet flower growing beside an oak. I could see by the way in which Mary was drawn to him that it would take but a word from him, and she would surrender. And as for him,—well, he was hopelessly entangled in the silken meshes of love's all-powerful net from the first day on which he did lay eyes upon this beautous lily-of-the-valley.

But why do I look to them for a picture? Had Harleston but cast his eyes in our direction (the which he did not) he should have beheld as great

a contrast, and, to be modest, at least one as pleasing to the eye.

"And how many sets am I to have?" I asked of Hazel.

"Well, I shall consider, and take note of thy conduct, and, if it be good, I may give unto thee the second,—and the—"

"Nay, nay, by mine honour, I do insist upon having the first, and the second, and a great many more."

"Oh, Walter, such an appetite as thou hast developed."

"But remember, I have been fasting for a long time."

Then she wrinkled her little snow-white forehead, and seemed weighing the matter very deliberately. "Well," she said, after she had appeared to consider at great length, "thou mayst have the first; but I will *not* promise thee any more before the dance, and if I do like that one, mayhap I will give thee some others."

I knew full well what that meant; so I said no more, but made up my mind to have more when the time did come round. And the time soon did come; for in those days of happiness and youth the sun scarce seemed to stay in the heavens for more than an hour at a time; so quickly did those days of dreams pass by. And yet, though it may sound like a contradiction, the sun seemed ever to

be shining; for we had it in our hearts. Oh, had we but known the clouds that were to pass over,— But there, I must draw the rein again, or I shall be telling the end of my story ere I shall have come unto it.

So the days flew past like sunbeams, and the evening when the great ball was to take place at length arrived.

Both Harleston and I had engaged the best tailor in London, and when we walked into the great audience hall that night there was not a soul in the place which could compete with us, for elegance of dress—except, perhaps, the Duke of Gloucester. And let me here put it down; that room contained all the best of fashion that English tailors could produce. The secret of our success lay in the fact that it was Gloucester's own tailor which did make our garments; he being not over busy whilst the Duke was absent in Scotland.

As the King (for some reason then unknown to us) had not yet arrived, the ladies and gentlemen, after having been presented to the Queen, were standing about, in groups of four or more, gossiping and making all manner of remarks as each of the guests arrived.

After we had been presented to her Majesty, and saluted the girls, we walked to the far end of the hall, where Gloucester, Buckingham, and a fellow by the name of Sir William Catesby, a law-

yer, with whom I shall have to deal later on, were standing. The Prince was giving some instructions to the musicians as we came up, but when he saw us he turned, and in that voice, as smooth as the finest silk, he said:—"Ah! Bradley, my dear friend, I am delighted to see thee here this evening, and thee, Harleston. I have heard how swift were my messengers, and I assure you both that it shall be none the worse for you that it was so."

We thanked his Grace for his pretty speech, in which, however, I could not help but detect some insincerity; but could not, at that time, imagine what his object could be—for this man ever did have one,—when he acted in this manner. However, I learned it later.

Just then the King did enter, leaning upon the arm of Lord Hastings. He looked very pale and his magnificent form seemed tottering as though with age, and yet Edward was still a young man. I could scarce believe mine eyes, so greatly was he changed since last I had seen him. "If so short a time can work such a marvel, he must be nearing his end," thought I. Then Harleston's prophecy, when first I had met him, flashed through my mind, and I wondered if it were going to be fulfilled. "But yet, he may be suffering from some temporary attack, and it will soon pass off." Thus did I try to convince myself that all was well.

But Harleston nudged me with his elbow, and said, in a voice that no one else might hear:—"Dost thou observe the King? If he doth live a month it shall greatly surprise me; for if the stamp of death be not upon that brow, then there is no such thing."

Then Gloucester and Buckingham came forward and, when his Majesty was seated upon his throne, enquired as to how he did, and kissed his hand, as though they loved him; when, at the same time, I verily believe, one of them at least had been happy had the King been dead.

Every one remarked upon the great change in the noble Edward, and hastened forward to enquire as to his health; when, if they did use their eyes, they could see their answer writ in bold letters upon that pale, yet handsome face.

His Majesty did not seem to like these enquiries; for he frowned on some which expressed their hope that he was not ill. When my friend and I paid our homage to him, however, he smiled and spoke most kindly unto us. This action of the King's did not seem to please some of those which had met with a reception less warm; for I observed on the faces of some of these lords and others, sneers and smiles; then would they turn to each other and converse, and look in our direction, and shrug their shoulders, as much as to say:—"It matters not; those upon whom he smiles to-day may be in the Tower to-morrow."

But to this we paid little attention; for it was but natural for them to feel jealous, after their cold reception.

When the presentation of the guests had been completed, King Edward—though it must have cost him an effort,—spoke in a clear voice, and told them the object of this entertainment, which was given, said his Majesty, in honor of his Royal brother, the Duke of Gloucester, and the brave nobles and knights who had assisted him in gaining a victory over our enemies, and so adding another jewel to the crown of England, by the acquisition of Berwick. Then came a surprise. The King turned to Gloucester and said: "My brother informs me that Scotland was assisted, to a great extent, in her unlawful and hostile acts against us, by our ancient foe—France. Several French noblemen of importance were taken prisoners on the field of Berwick; which is strong evidence against that disturber of the peace of nations, across the Channel.

"In a few short months we hope to see ye gathered in this same room, for the purpose of celebrating our victory over France."

Then, as the King ended this speech, which appeared greatly to exhaust him, we all did break into a roar of applause, which did not stop until his Majesty raised his hand, which did command our silence. Then another motion from the King, and the musicians started up.

The Duke of Buckingham led the Queen to the centre of the room, and started the ball in earnest. The scene that followed, reminded me of one rock starting to slide from the top of a hill: presently, as it goes, others do join it in its journey, and soon the whole hillside is one sliding mass. So soon as her Majesty and Buckingham had completed a measure, others joined in, and in but a few short moments the whole hall was swaying back and forth, first this way, then that, yet ever in harmony, like the waves as they rush upon the shore and then recede, and come back again, with the same delightful time, but ever with a restful variation.

Needless to say, I was not long in finding my delightful partner. However, I was not pleased when I came up to find that fellow, Catesby, endeavoring to persuade her to give unto him my dance. I was close beside him ere he knew it, and then I heard him say (the which, had he the manners of a dog, he had left unsaid) "Methinks, Lady Hazel, thy partner must have forgotten thee."

"Thou shouldst not think of matters which do not concern thee, Sir," I said, quietly, in his ear, as I took Hazel by the hand and led her forth.

"And such a trifling matter," said the impudent knave, as he shrugged his shoulders and walked off.

Had he struck me a blow upon my cheek he

could not have more insulted me. Verily, I boiled with indignation, and swore a great oath, to myself, that I would make him eat those words, the first time that I should have an opportunity. So greatly was I occupied with thinking of the pleasure I would have when my good sword should be sticking through his body that Hazel, at last, had to pull me by the sleeve, in order to attract my attention.

"What is the matter with thee, Walter? Thou art walking as though in a dream; and an evil one at that, judging from the expression on your face. I do hope that my little presence is not so unpleasant as to make thee look like that."

This recalled me to my senses; so I apologized for my conduct, and joined with the others, in their gaiety.

When I look back at that night, and see that fairy form passing through the movements with me, it doth seem, unto mine old eyes, like a dream enacted by the mind, where angels appear in mortal form and glide around us, with their feet touching nothing more substantial than the air. And indeed it was a dream, and one that can never be too oft repeated. Ah, that was indeed a happy night; and so many years ago.

Hazel had not heard my remark to Catesby, nor —by some happy chance—his insolent retort, which latter had, to mine ears, sounded loud enough for the whole great room to hear. But

that must have been on account of the sting it carried for me. Be that as it may, she had not heard; and for this I was thankful; for had she, it should have worried her, and the evening had then been spoiled for both of us; and I would not have had that happen for a kingdom.

When we had finished our set I asked Hazel if I might have the next.

"No, Walter," she replied; "I have already promised it to Sir William Catesby; although I do not think much of lawyers," she added.

Of course this made me to boil again; but I did not say so, to Hazel, for fear she might be frightened. All I said was:—"I detest that fellow, and do not like to see thee dance with him."

"Well, 'tis much more disagreeable to me," she answered; "and thou mayst be assured that I will not dance with him again to-night."

"Nor any other night," thought I, "if I may but get my sword betwixt his ribs."

When the next set did start, as I had no desire for dancing with any other woman, after having danced with that dainty flower, I strolled into one of the adjoining rooms, and sat myself down in a comfortable seat, behind the open door; so that I might not be disturbed in my meditations, which made my heart to beat the faster the further I let them run. For the one thought in my mind was how and when I had better declare myself unto the dear maid which I so madly loved, and get her

promise to some day make me the happiest man on earth, by meeting with me at that trysting place, where the most high ambitions of love are realized, namely, the altar of Holy Church. Just as I had fully made up my mind to have Hazel give me a definite answer the first time I should catch her alone (and now I felt certain what that answer would be) Gloucester and Buckingham walked into the room; the former leaning upon the arm of the latter, as was his wont, when the two were together. I saw them through the opening where the door hangs to the wall; but they evidently thought that they were the sole occupants of the room; for, the moment they entered, I heard the Prince say in a low tone:—"As we are alone here I may say that which thine ears alone should hear." Then, before I could make a move, and make known my presence (for Heaven truly knows I have never had any desire to play the eavesdropper) he continued: "His Majesty's time is short; dost thou not see the seal of death upon his brow?"

"Indeed, my lord, methinks that thou art right," replied the other.

"Then, Buckingham, we may play our hand. Our time is coming; watch and be prepared for a bold stroke.

"Hereford, thine own by right of birth, but now usurped by yon grasping brother of mine, is a grand earldom, is it not, Cousin?"

I could not hear Buckingham's reply, and in another moment some others did enter, and the two, after speaking to them pleasantly, left the room.

"Now what in the devil's name means all this?" thought I. "His Majesty's time is short." "Hereford is a grand earldom." These two remarks kept ringing in mine ears and, although I could not at that time tell what they did mean, yet was I convinced that there was some deviltry afoot which meant no good unto the Queen, in case the King should die; for Gloucester ever did dislike both her and her favorites. However, my reflections were brought to an end by the musicians, who started playing for the next set.

I at once made my way to the crowd, and found Hazel and led her forth and joined in the dance. I danced next with Mary, and Harleston took my late partner, so it was a fair exchange. The next two sets I went through with other ladies whose names I do not now recall and, as they have no bearing on this tale, it matters nothing. However, both these ladies seemed prodigiously relieved when our dances were finished; for I was too much engaged with taking care of a whirl of thoughts, with which my mind was struggling, to be very talkative. When I had led the last of these unto her seat, I had fully made up my mind what my course of action was to be. So I walked

over to that fairest of maids, and asked her if she were not tired dancing.

"In faith I am, Walter," she answered; "and, when I saw thee coming, I feared that thou didst want me to go through a set with thee; and then I should have been afraid to refuse, for thou art such a sensitive and fiery mortal thou mightst have been offended."

I led her into the smaller room, where I had been sitting when I heard Gloucester's remarks to Buckingham, and where I was now going to make some remarks myself, and personal ones at that, but not to Buckingham.

How fiercely my heart thumped, as though it were striving to burst through my ribs and fly unto its little mate.

When we were seated all my fine speeches seemed to have forsaken me, and I sat there as mute and dumb as the Tower of London. Now why this should be I know not, for this was the opportunity I had so long awaited. At length the dear maid began to be uneasy and, as she told me afterwards, to suspect what was the matter. Then I saw my time was come, and if I were to say anything I should have to do it now; so I started in recklessly, as a sailor throws himself from his sinking ship, into those tempting waves, and, no matter how great his confidence may be, yet he knows not if there be rocks beneath the swells or no.

"Hazel," said I, "thou hast known me long, and I that same have you, and ever since the day when first thou camest to court, I have felt it mine especial duty to watch over and protect thee, shouldst thou ever need it. This latter you have never guessed; for what right had I to so appoint myself your guardian?

"Until to-night my tongue would never put into words the pleasant agonies with which my heart hath for so long been bursting. But to-night, since I have started, I feel as though my tongue were a bell, rung by mine uncontrollable heart strings, and, as that thumping engine doth swing back and forth, my tongue rings out the universal notes,—*I love thee.* For thy happiness and pleasure I would freely give my life, and then rejoice at having served thee. I can say no more; for my heart smothers me; so I lay it at thy feet. Do not spurn it, but give another to fill its place, and one that will be more faithful unto its keeper."

During this speech, which was the outburst of mine overloaded soul, the dear one sat with her precious head bent as that of a dainty flower before the hot blast of summer. Her hand toyed nervously with a tassel which hung from her waist. Her bosom rose and fell so quickly that it seemed like the ripples on the beach; and her whole frame quivered with emotion,—and so did mine.

When I had finished she did not speak for a moment, and I began to fear that I had frightened her with my passionate declaration. But presently she raised her eyes to mine, and they were full of tears. Then she laid her head upon my shoulder, and sighed and smiled, both at once, as though her happiness had forced out her tears, and the smiles were sent to dry them.

"There is my hand, Walter," she said, "and with it goes my heart. Take both of them, for they belong to thee. In faith, the latter thou hast had some time. I am sure thou wilt be kind to them; for I know thou lovest me truly.

"Oh, Walter, when thou speakest to me, with mine ears I hang upon the flower of thy so earnest speech, and they drink in the precious sweetness from its bloom."

I kissed away love's dewdrops from her cheeks, and now I say it truly, without the recklessness of youth, there has been only one other moment in my life in which I have felt such heart-expanding joy. But I shall tell ye of that anon.

So there we sat and spoke those words which are so dear to lovers, until that set was over, and we were reluctantly compelled to go back and join the others in the ball-room.

So soon as I had taken Hazel unto her place near by the Queen, I started in search of Harleston. I found him engaged in conversation with my lord Hastings. As I came up he turned and

exclaimed:—" Ah! the lost is found. I had surely thought that thou must have grown tired of the dance and gone to bed."

The High Chamberlain here left us, and took his place beside the King.

" Frederick, I have something of importance to say to thee. Kindly come with me to another room, so that we may not be overheard; as that which I am about to tell is of a private nature."

So we entered the room which had that night been the scene of two so important conversations. When I had made sure that we were quite alone I motioned Harleston to a chair, whilst I remained standing before him.

" My friend," said I, when he was seated, " I have two communications of importance to make. The first I know thou shalt be pleased to hear, the other is not so pleasant; for it may mean great trouble to us all, if mine interpretation of what I overheard be correct. The first is this,—" and there I stopped and stood first on the one foot and then on the other, and felt my face get red, for all the world like a small boy making a confession when he has done something wrong. Why I should feel like this I know not, unless it be one of the many peculiarities of that very eccentric person known as Master Human Nature, of whom we know so little.

My friend regarded me with the faintest suspicion of a smile playing around the corners of his

mouth, and also showing itself in a barely perceptible twinkle in his eyes.

At length he said:—"Well, Walter, what is it? Out with it man, or thou shalt never know whether I will be glad to hear it or no."

"Well, then,—*I have told her,*" I almost whispered.

"Told her what?" he asked, laughing outright at mine embarrassment.

"Why,—why,—that,—that,—"

"What in the devil's name is the matter with thee?" cried he, not giving me time to finish.

"That I love her,—Hazel,—Lady Hazel Woodville, Lady-in-waiting on her Majesty the Queen," I answered; thus trying to give the impression that I had made it perfectly clear before, but that his skull was too thick to permit my meaning to pass through.

"Bravo, bravo! my dear friend," cried he, as he sprang to his feet and grasped my hand and slapped me on the shoulder. "Thou didst get it out at last. Why, Bradley, I knew it the moment thou didst start to hesitate and fidget so. Those symptoms, following those dreamy fits, from which thou hast been suffering of late, are the surest indications of that peculiar disease of the heart which so sadly affects the mind. One is almost sure to catch it when one doth come in frequent contact with fair maidens. Now the one with which thou hast been associated so much is

simply a human moon, to make men mad. Therefore, my dear fellow, I was quite certain that thou wouldst soon cry out for it. But tell me," he said, more seriously, "what did she say?" Then before I could tell him:—"I need not ask; 'tis writ upon your smiling countenance."

He had scarcely finished his congratulations when in walked Hazel and Mary, arm in arm. When they came up to us, my dear maid's face was crimson with blushes, and Mary's contracted with joyous smiles.

"Hast thou told him yet?" asked Hazel, glancing in Harleston's direction.

I nodded. "And doth Mary know?" I asked.

"I just told her," she whispered.

Then Harleston and Mary came up to us, and as my little golden haired cousin took my hand and congratulated me for having won the dearest maid in Christendom, Frederick reached across, and taking Hazel's hand, wished her all happiness, and said some pleasant things of me, the which I shall not put down.

So there we stood and talked and laughed—for laughter is ever waiting to burst forth, when the heart is light and young, and filled with love's tender passion—till we heard a commotion in the ballroom. We rushed out to see what was the cause of these unusual sounds. The scene we beheld prodigiously surprised us. Every one was hurrying in the direction of the throne, and mak-

ing all sorts of exclamations. I left Harleston to look after the ladies, and hurriedly I made my way through the crushing guests, until I was near the King. His Majesty was hanging over the arm of his chair, and leaning his head upon the shoulder of Hastings. He appeared to have fainted; for he was deadly pale, his eyes closed, and the lids trembling like the wings of a wounded bird. Some evidently thought that he had already died, or was just dying; for they were wringing their hands and muttering prayers, when they might have been of more service had they stood further back, and so allowed the King to get some fresh air, which—in these cases—I do consider a better physic than most men's prayers.

Presently the Physician Royal, which had been sent for by the Queen, arrived. He at once ordered every one, no matter of what rank he might be to stand aback. Then he had a bench brought forward, and two gentlemen carried the King and laid him at full length upon it. Vigorously did they rub his hands and face, and then they bled him. Then the noble sufferer did show some signs of recovering. Hastings and Stanley did now lift up the bench, with its Royal load, and carried it from the room. The Queen followed, wringing her hands and weeping.

The great ball was over, much before its time. The guests stood, for some time, talking in lit-

tle groups; most of their conversation being scarce above a whisper; for there is something which doth awe us, when the great are thus struck down.

I went back to the girls and Frederick; but a dampness had fallen upon our happiness and made us to feel quiet.

We remained only a short time, and then made our ways unto our several apartments.

Thus in sadness ended the entertainment given by his Majesty, King Edward, the fourth of that name, in honor of our victory over the Scottish king. But in the hall I did kiss Hazel ere I did let her go that night.

"The signal was then given."—*Page 83.*

CHAPTER VIII

THE DUEL

WHEN I reached my room I sat down for a moment and thought. Then I arose and walked about the room, and thought, of nothing but my great happiness, and my good fortune in having at last accomplished that which I had for so long desired.

Was it not delightful to be certain that some day my darling Hazel was to be the mistress of Bradley House, which had stood without a mistress for so long a time.

I pictured to myself how I would have the place altered and brightened, that it might be in better keeping with its fair inmate. I could even hear her light-hearted song, as she fluttered about the house, and played among the flowers, like a gayly-colored butterfly. I saw us strolling through our park. Her fair hand was resting on my shoulder, and mine arm did encircle her fairy waist. The sun was pouring through the trees like streams of fine gold. The birds were singing all around us, and all nature seemed trying to keep in harmony with our love and add unto our happiness. Now and then would I stoop and pick a flower and

place it in her beauteous, dark brown hair. Then did I see my father's faithful old servant, Dickon, come shuffling across the lawn to tell us that it was time for dinner.

And so my dream goeth on, till it is interrupted by Harleston, who enters my room. He was dressed in a long flowing robe, and there was nothing about his appearance that would tell us he had been to a ball that night.

"Well upon my soul, Bradley, art thou still sitting up? Why, methought that I was the only late bird about the Castle. And your clothes still on. Come, come, Walter, thou must be careful and do not let this flood of happiness drown thy reason."

"Fear not for that," I replied; "for the said flood is so thick that my reason doth float upon the surface."

"Indeed thou dost put it well. But come now, I must to that which brought me here at this unseemly hour. When you did take me into that small room, this evening, thou saidst that thou hadst two communications of importance to make. So far you have made but one: it was my desire to hear the other that brought me here tonight."

"Ah, yes, I had forgot," I replied. "Now the second is this, and I will not so hesitate in the telling of it as I did with the first." Then I told

him all I had overheard, and how I came to be the unwilling listener.

When I had finished he said:—"Thou mayst thank Heaven that thou didst overhear that same conversation; for it doth give us the key unto the puzzle which Richard will present to England, in case the King doth not recover. The Queen should be warned," he continued.

"And yet it might avail nothing. In case we warned the Queen, and the King recovered, we might find our heads upon the block for having interfered. It is a dangerous matter to play with royalty; for," I continued, "his Majesty King Edward is a good and kind master, but he is also one which doth not like his family matters pried into. When he is roused he is the very devil in human form. We have the Duke of Clarence for an example. We had better think of his grave of malmsey, and so profit by the picture, and hold our peace." Methought it better to warn him; for I began to fear that my dear friend's honesty might lead off his better judgment, and so he might fall into disfavor with the King, should his Majesty recover, and this was ever but the first step in the ladder leading up the scaffold.

"Perhaps thou art right," he said. "I shall at least keep mine own counsel so long as the King doth live; for I have no desire to have my head decorate the walls of the Tower."

"And now, my friend," said I; "there is another matter that I wish to speak with thee about." Then I told him of my tilt of the tongue with Catesby, and asked him to arrange matters so that we might have a meeting at his earliest convenience.

"I do not like to see thee fight him," said Sir Frederick, when I had finished the asking of my request; "for he is a friend of my Lord Hastings, and though I detest the fellow, yet do I treat him with civility on the Chancellor's account. However, Walter, after what has passed, there is nothing left but the swords; at which game methinks that thou hast little to fear from any man in England."

"Thou art wrong there, my friend, for this Catesby is the pupil of a great French swordsman, and there are few in England which dare to stand before him. However," I continued, with some pride, "it shall never be said of a Bradley that he quietly did rest with an insult still hanging to his cheek, and never burning it."

"Well, thou shalt have fair play at least," said my friend, "and though he may have studied the art of swordsmanship with a score of Frenchmen, yet have I no doubt as to the result. I have seen thee use the foils enough to feel satisfied that Catesby shall have no advantage over thee; and besides, he hath not more than half thy strength."

"Yea, that is true."

"But no matter how thou mayst feel towards him be sure and do not kill him; for he stands in great favour with Gloucester, whom we cannot now afford to offend. Run him through the arm or shoulder and thine honour will be satisfied."

I knew my friend was talking thus in order that he might lend mine arm more confidence. But this was not necessary; for even though Catesby were a skilled swordsman, yet did I account myself his match at the game, and besides it was true what Harleston said, I had more strength, which is not the least thing to be taken into account in these affairs.

Early the next day Sir Frederick saw Catesby and gave him my challenge.

"And so," said the lawyer, "your friend grows tired of this life and desires to join the saints?"

"Indeed, sir," my friend replied, "the chances of your going to another world are equally good; though whether thy companions there will be saints or no, I cannot tell."

To this retort Catesby made no reply.

The place and time of our meeting were settled. At sundown that evening we were to meet near the far end of the Little Park, where a large oak doth stand alone. This time and place were decided on in order to make certain that we should not be interrupted; for this spot was never frequented at that hour.

That evening, at about the half of an hour before the appointed time I, accompanied by Harleston, set out by a round about way, so that when Catesby and his second should go to the meeting place no one would suspect our object. They, however, having taken the more direct and therefore shorter path, had reached the spot and were waiting when we arrived.

Sir Richard Ratcliffe was to act as Catesby's second.

The spot chosen was one which seemed made by nature purposely for such contests. For the distance of about a score of feet all around the great oak—which arose in the centre like an ever watchful sentinel guarding that portion of the park—the ground was clear and level as a round green table. As I looked up at that fine old veteran which had braved the storms of centuries, and still showed no other signs of its contests than his battle scarred old features, methought of the many engagements he had watched, and the tales of bloodshed he might tell if he but could.

The sun was no longer shining where we stood, but the top of the great tree still caught his last gleams as he sank below the horizon. As the last of these rays left the old oak our time was up, so we began to strip for the encounter. We took off our cloaks, belts and doublets, and gave them unto our seconds, who laid them in two heaps, one on each side of the open space. I rolled up my

right sleeve to the shoulder, and Harleston handed unto me my naked sword. My friend and Ratcliffe spoke together in whispers, for a moment, and then the latter, standing with his back to the tree, said in a loud clear voice:—

"Gentlemen:—Sir Frederick Harleston and I have agreed, in your behalf, in case either of you should be disarmed, or placed in a position where it should be impossible for you to defend yourself, the fight shall be stopped until such time as ye shall again be upon an equal footing. Both Sir Frederick and I do insist that this rule shall be observed, otherwise we do refuse to act. Should either of you take advantage of your opponent's being unarmed or placed *hors de combat,* and so take his life, the one so breaking this rule shall be proclaimed a coward throughout the length and breadth of England. This shall be his punishment for his unknightly conduct. Have I made all perfectly clear?"

We both replied in the affirmative, and agreed to be bound by this rule, which was a very humane and fair one.

Ratcliffe then took his place behind Catesby, and Harleston behind me.

The signal was then given, and we approached each other cautiously, each looking for an opening. Then our swords came together with a sharp click, and slid along each other like two icicles being rubbed together. The moment I felt

his sword against mine I knew that I had not been misinformed when I heard that Catesby was a pupil of one of the greatest swordsmen in Europe. His wrist was like steel, and his point began to play on either side of mine with such rapidity as warned me to stand on the defensive until I got more used to his ways. Suddenly he lunged with murderous and savage swiftness, his point aimed at my heart. I met him with a quick and firm guard, and for the next few moments we did content ourselves with sounding each other with an occasional lunge. Then he changed his tactics, in the twinkling of an eye, and flew at me like lightning. His sword seemed everywhere at once. I felt a sharp sting in my sword arm, as his weapon scratched it. Then I felt it higher up and near unto my shoulder. I slowly began to give ground, as it had been the part of a fool to stand still in an attack of this kind, which I knew could be of no long duration. In this I was right; for seeing that he could not reach my chest, and that he was soon wearing himself out with this furious pace, he slowed his attack somewhat and made more careful lunges. I now saw that I could, in a short time, wear down his strength, by keeping a cool head and a wary eye. Soon I touched him lightly on the shoulder, and had the satisfaction of seeing his shirt stained with his blood. This, however, seemed to refresh him; for he made another of his fierce attacks, which again compelled me to give ground. In

this I did not divine his object, which was to force me back against the tree. As I stepped back to avoid a lunge more savage than the others, I felt my heel strike the tree. This put me something off my guard. He seized the opportunity, and drove his sword at my chest with all the remaining strength in his villainous body. I stepped aside, and gave him my straight point in the right shoulder, near the neck. However, I had not been quick enough; for I felt a sharp twinge in the fleshy part of my left arm, as he nailed it to the oak. His sword snapped off short, and I was left pinned to the tree, as I have seen boys do with butterflies. Catesby fell, bathed in blood; but methinks it were more from exhaustion than from his wound that he did fall; for the latter was but little more serious than mine own. Sir Frederick pulled at the blade with his handkerchief wound around his hand, and at length set me free.

Catesby soon regained consciousness, and we were bandaged carefully with cloths that had been brought for the purpose.

As I saw him walk off, leaning on the arm of Ratcliffe, I regretted that I had not given him my point lower down.

But there came a time when I would have given ten years of my life for the same opportunity of ridding the world of this accursed villain. But ye, my children, shall judge of that later on in this story.

CHAPTER IX

THE KING'S DEATH

MINE arm was quite sore and stiff for some weeks; but as I had at that time no duties to attend to, it did attract but little attention. I kept to my rooms most of the time, but occasionally took a walk through the park with my fair Hazel by my side.

She was greatly alarmed when she learned that I had been wounded; and she lectured me most severely for so exposing myself to such "foolish dangers," as she was pleased to call them.

"For you know," said she, looking up at me with her head held to the one side, and her face most serious, "if thou shouldst be killed, it would kill me too; so, for my sake, promise me that thou wilt fight no more those fearful duels. Heaven knows 'tis bad enough when thou, as a soldier, hast to fight battles; but this murder should not be permitted in a Christian land."

"But, my darling," I replied, "when one man doth insult another the one which is insulted must avenge himself."

"Yes, but if men would ever learn not to insult

each other there should be then no cause for these horrible affairs."

I attempted to argue the point with her; but found it of no avail. Had I been the age I now am I might have saved my breath.

"However," she said, after I had given up the task of trying to convince her that I was right, "I am glad that thou didst wound him."

"Why?" I asked.

"Well," she said, slowly, and at the same time watching me closely, "that night of the ball—" and she stopped there long enough for a very pretty blush to cover her face, as a veil, "the impudent fellow had the temerity to try and make love to me."

"What?" I cried, as I grasped my scabbard, and started my wound to pain afresh. "I'll kill the knave the first time I see his sneering face!"

"No, no, Walter, do nothing of the kind. That was the reason I did not tell thee ere this; I knew it would set thee mad. Oh, dear! thou hast such an evil temper. He is now punished enough; so promise me that thou wilt do nothing to bring about another duel;" and she laid her hand on mine arm, and coaxed me so nicely that I had to make the promise; though later I did regret it.

Since the night of the ball the King's health had been getting worse with every day that passed. His Majesty, seeing that he had not long

to live, now called a meeting of the different factions who were ever jangling with each other, for the purpose of reconciling them; for he feared, that when he should be dead, their quarrels might lead to great strife in the kingdom, and endanger the rule of his son.

These parties, as ye must all know, were, first—the Queen and her favorites, secondly—Buckingham and the most powerful of the ancient nobility—to which party belonged my Lord Hastings—and thirdly,—Gloucester himself, for the reason that he did not wish to be connected with—and so be dependent on—either of the other parties.

When all these were come unto his bedside, the King addressed them thus:—"You all must know that I am about to leave this fair kingdom, where I have had such strife and yet such happiness, to join that other land to which spirits alone can go. Before I leave it is my pleasure to have ye all at peace with one another. In case this strife should continue, it will surely lead to great troubles for poor England, which we all do love so dearly. Therefore, my faithful subjects and friends, bethink ye of your duty. Here in this room, before ye leave my presence, I wish to see ye all embrace each other and swear by my deathbed to live in peace together.

"My brother Richard, I charge thee to look after my children, which shall soon be fatherless, and may God deal with thee as thou dost deal with

them. I wish thee to be the protector of my son Edward, and to assist him in his government until such time as he doth come unto years of discretion."

So there by his bedside they went through the forms which the King did ask of them. I say, went through the forms; for that was all they did. I do not believe that one of those present ever intended to keep the oath he there made to the King; for their conduct after his death is sufficient evidence of their insincerity.

'Twas told to me afterwards, by one which saw all that which I have here described, that as Richard left the room, with his handkerchief to his eyes, it was to hide his laughter rather than his tears. And I do believe this to be so; for I consider it impossible for that man ever to have had the tenderness of heart necessary to produce one tear. Be that as it may, he was not long in demonstrating his love and charity towards his brother's children.

One morning, some days after this bedside gathering, when I met Hazel in the park, as was now my wont, her eyes were red with weeping.

"Come, come, my fair one, thou must not look so unhappy, or else I shall fear that thou hast ceased to love me. Now tell me what is the matter, that I may console thee."

"Hast thou then not heard the news?" she asked.

"I have not," I replied, "it must be evil news indeed, to make thee so unhappy."

"The King is dead," she said.

"When did he die?"

"About an hour since;" and then she wiped her eyes again.

"Why dost thou weep so for the King?" I asked; for I did not like to see Hazel weeping because another man had died.

"Oh, thou stupid!" she cried out impatiently; "cannot you see that it is on the poor Queen's account? I love her as I did my own dear, and now dead, mother; and when I see her in such sorrow it maketh me to feel as if 'twere mine own."

I felt abashed for not having seen this for myself; but men are so thick headed, in these matters, that they can never know the way a woman looks at things until she doth explain herself. Now I had rather face a regiment, single handed, than see a woman weep; so I stood there as on a pillory, saying nothing, but feeling uncommon uncomfortable.

Presently she looked up sharply, and said,— "Well, what art thou staring at? Is there anything about me that does not please thee?"

To this I made no reply, as I knew silence to be the best remedy for these little outbursts of temper. Remember, my dears, at that time Hazel had considerable fire in her make up. And I

would not give an old gauntlet for a maid which had not; for this I do consider to be the very salt of one's character; and what is a fine dish without it be seasoned properly.

When I had stood quietly for some moments, I saw some signs of relenting begin to betray themselves in a softening of the face. "Is the storm passed?" I asked. This brought a smile. All the temper had vanished, and she was more loving than ever.

"Thou must not think badly of me because I was cross with thee, dear," she said, looking up at my face in the most coaxing and bewitching manner—of which she so well knew the power: "I felt so sorrowful when I saw the dear Queen weeping and wringing her hands in despair, that I did not know myself. Thou wilt forgive me, wilt thou not, Walter?"

Then I made a great show of granting her pardon, that I might have a good reason for a certain show of tenderness.

'Twas like a little whirlwind in a dusty road, when the particles of sparkling sand have settled back to their proper level the way is more smooth than ever.

When we were seated upon a bench beneath a fine old oak, which stood in a place more private than its brethren, as though its dignity had made it to hold itself aloof from their society, like the

head of some most ancient house keeps ever from the vulgar herd, she asked me how I thought the King's death should affect the kingdom.

"Ah! my dear," I replied, "that is the question which I have been trying to answer since some time before his Majesty did leave us. If Gloucester can be honest all shall be well; for he is a man of great ability and can, if he will, keep the little King firmly seated on the throne. What I do fear is, that, when he tastes the sweets of ruling, he may not be willing to give it up; but like a tiger, when he once hath tasted blood, must needs have more. Young Edward, in his hands, will be as wax, and moulded to the form that best suits Gloucester. The King need not fear his humbler subjects, but must still hold a wary eye upon his uncle."

I did not think it well to tell her the conversation I had overheard the night of the great ball; for it could have done no good, and should but have alarmed her.

"And dost thou then think that the Duke of Gloucester is not honest?" asked Hazel. "Why, he seems to be most honourable and just, so far as I have seen."

"So far as thou hast seen," I replied. "That distance is not great. My father—rest his soul—saw this same Richard stab to the heart, without provocation, and in the coldest blood, young Edward, son of Henry. I've heard my father, with

tears upon his cheeks, tell the tale of that foul deed.

"The young Prince, after Tewkesbury, was brought before King Edward and his brothers.

"'What meanest thou, so to rebel against the laws of England and her Sovereign, by thus taking up arms to disturb the peace of this thy native land?' asked our now dead King.

"'Proud and rebellious York,' replied the youth; 'by what right dost thou question us, thy true and lawful Sovereign? Hadst thou the loyalty equal to thine impertinence, thou wouldst now be at our feet, craving our pardon for this show of force before us, England's only King.'

"My father said 'twas grand to see the young Prince, as he did finish this speech, so full of dignity and power. His face was flushed with excitement, and with pride; and as he raised his hand to Heaven, as though asking of the powers there to bear him out, he looked as though he were inspired.

"Then Richard of Gloucester, now our *pro tem.* ruler, unable to look upon this righteous indignation, with his steel gauntlet, struck young Edward on that tender cheek. This proud bud of the noble flower of Lancaster could ill brook this insult; especially from one of a rival house. His hand flew to his dagger. Gloucester, who knew full well that this was but an impulse, pounced on the Prince, as doth the tiger on its ten-

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der prey, buried his weapon in that noble flesh, and, as the body fell upon the ground, he spurned it with his armoured foot. This," I continued, "doth show the tenderness of Richard, and the treatment that they may expect, which do not please his Highness, the Protector. His words and his actions are of but distant kin."

"Then dost thou not think he will be bound by his oath, made to the King before his Majesty deceased?" asked Hazel.

"Indeed who can tell?" I replied. "Mayhap a year will show, mayhap two. He may be honest, and he may be not. Which course he doth find to be most profitable, it is mine opinion, he will follow."

Thus we spent most of the morning, discussing the policy of the new Protector; and methinks the surmises we made that morning in the park turned out to be as true as the great majority of the prophecies which are, even now, so prevalent in this glorious and enlightened reign of his most gracious Majesty, King Henry, of that name the eighth, which, despite his faults—and we all must have our own—is a most noble master.

CHAPTER X

I AM SENT TO LUDLOW

So THE King was buried, with a great show of pomp, and much mourning, in the splendid chapel of Windsor Castle, by those which had followed him through his career of alternate sunshine and shadow. Many of these friends, who had basked in the rays of the sun of York, when the sky was clear, but who, when a cloud had come across its brilliant disk, found more congenial weather elsewhere, were now the loudest in their lamentations, as they followed the noble Edward's body to its last resting place.

The Queen scarce ate or slept for many days or nights; but walked her rooms, and wept and prayed. 'Twas a sad sight, as Hazel told me, to see her wander from one room to another, and gaze upon the articles which Edward so had loved. But when the King's body had been buried she seemed to cast off her sorrow as she would a garment. It was now her duty to protect the interests of her son. He must be brought from Ludlow Castle, whither he had been sent by his father, that his presence there might awe the Welsh, and keep them from revolting; for this was a habit

that they had always had, and one which seemed hard for them to forget.

"Would that I had a faithful messenger to carry a letter to my brother. I cannot tell who may be trusted. My son, Dorset, might be sent; but yet I need him here to counsel me."

"I know of one whom you may trust," said Hazel, who was present when the Queen had thus spoken to herself.

"Thou hast ever been a true girl, Hazel, and I love thee well. Tell me who this champion is, for well would I like to see a true man about this court."

"Sir Walter Bradley, may it please your Majesty. He it was which brought the news of the taking of Berwick, and who was rewarded by the late King, your husband."

"Ah, yes! I do remember me," said the Queen. "He should be a swift messenger. I will send for him at once."

So I was sent for, and found, and brought into the Queen's apartments.

"Sir Walter, thou hast been recommended to me as one of my only too few faithful friends." As I glanced hastily in Hazel's direction, her Majesty smiled as though she had read my heart. "I wish thee to be the bearer of a letter unto my brother, Lord Rivers, which now resides at Ludlow Castle. This business concerns my son, your King, and is therefore of great importance. I

shall have the packet ready to-morrow morning; so thou wilt not have much time for thine adieux." And again she glanced at Hazel, and then at me, smiling the while, with that sweet smile which could have sent me through fire and water to serve this most excellent, and yet unfortunate, Queen.

"I shall be ready and waiting for thine instructions, Madam," I replied, as I bowed myself from the room.

Hazel followed me into the next apartment, with an anxious look upon her dear face. "Is thine arm yet healed enough for thee to make this journey, Walter dear?" she asked. "I had forgot thy wound, until I saw thee try to open the door, just now. I was so proud to have thee chosen as the Queen's messenger, when there are so many upon whom she hath conferred favours, and yet which she doth not trust, that I thought not of thy wound. Had I not better tell the Queen, and have her choose another?"

"Not for the world, my dear. It is too great an honour to fling to one side on account of a scratch, when one is chosen from so many which are more worthy of her trust. Besides, my wound is almost well." This latter was not in strict conformity with the scripture, which commands us to speak the truth; but it was necessary for me to keep her from saying anything to the Queen that might put a stop to my going.

I hastened to my rooms and instructed my servant to have everything in readiness for my journey in the morning. Then I went in search of Sir Frederick. I found him in his room, seated near the window, and poring over a volume of Virgil.

"Well, well!" cried I, "a pretty occupation for a soldier. For the love of Heaven leave such matters to the priests. I had too much of that ere I did buckle on the sword."

"My dear Bradley," he replied, "one can never have too much of such material.

"Do but listen:—

"'*Jamaque ibat dicto pareus et dona Cupido*
Regia portabat Tyrüs, duce laetus Achate!'"

"Stop, stop! if thou dost have any love or respect for me!" I cried. "If thou goest on with that I shall surely die. The only Latin line that I do consider worth remembering was writ by one of those great pagans, and goeth somewhat in this manner:—'*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*' That," I continued, "is a line for every soldier to remember.

"But come, leave the myth of a masquerading ancient for another time; for now, my friend, I must talk of other things, which are more real." Then I told him of the Queen's commission.

"Dost thou not desire to have a companion on this journey?" he asked. "Though, if I do go,

this time thou must promise to not ride so fast as we did on our trip from Scotland."

"No, Frederick," I replied, "methinks it best that thou shouldst remain here. Your company, as thou knowest, would be greatly appreciated by me; yet do I think that thou couldst serve her Majesty better wert thou to stay at Windsor. All the nobles are now flocking unto Gloucester's side, and she thinks that they do aim at lessening her influence over the King. If it be possible for thee to serve her I know that thou wilt do so. Heaven knows she doth need all the assistance she can get, if she has to cope with Gloucester."

"And of what use can I be against men of such power?" he asked.

"Perhaps none; yet thou mayst in some way serve her."

The next morning, after I had said farewell to Hazel, the Queen, Mary and Harleston, I set out on my journey, accompanied by three picked men of my command. Two of these fellows were men which had served under me ever since I had been at court, and had proven to be, both, most excellent swordsmen and trusty servants; that is so far as most of these men are trusty—the which is not an over strong recommendation. The third was a mighty Irishman, by the name of Michael O'Brien, which had come to Windsor shortly after our return from Scotland. I knew nothing of him; but he had a face of exceeding

honesty, and besides, his giant strength was equal to that of four soldiers of the general kind.

My trip was quite uneventful and monotonous.

In order that I may let you know the length of time that it doth take for news to travel in the country I will tell ye a little incident, by way of illustration.

When we reached Tewkesbury, near which Edward had won his battle, and where Henry's son was murdered, it was the time of day when we must needs rest and refresh ourselves. When I had entered an inn—which seemed the best afforded by the town—and was seated at table a sedate looking old gentleman came and sat himself down on the side opposite to me.

"I crave thy pardon, young sir, for my freedom in thus addressing thee, who are, to me, a stranger; but I perceive, from the trappings of thy horse, that thou dost come from court. Indeed at one time I did know the names of most all of the grand court ladies; for I have not always lived in these God forsaken parts," added the old man, with some show of pride. "But all this is beside the mark," he continued. "When I espied thee I came over to thee that I might enquire concerning the health of his Majesty."

"He hath not yet been brought to Windsor, or Westminster, and, as he now resides at Ludlow, of his health I cannot speak."

"But when went he unto Ludlow?" asked the inquisitive old man.

"Now that I do not remember," I replied; "but, as I think, it was some months before his father died."

"My dear young sir, his father died some twenty years ago."

I stared at him for several moments, thinking he must be mad. Then I saw what was the matter. "Why, hast thou not heard that his Majesty, King Edward IV is dead?" I asked, in surprise.

"Not until this moment," he replied.

So now, my children, ye can see how long it took for news to travel in those days, of which I am writing. True, the people are becoming more progressive now, but it is surprising still to learn how long it doth take for news to reach those distant parts, even yet.

We stayed that night in Tewkesbury.

The next evening we rode into the town of Ludlow, and entered the Castle.

I was admitted into the presence of the young King, who was, at that time, but twelve years of age. As I was ushered in I beheld the little King, and his uncle, Lord Rivers, sitting near his Majesty, by the casement. I went forward, and kneeling at young Edward's feet, I kissed his hand and said:—"Hail to your Majesty!"

At first he did not seem to comprehend my words; for he showed surprise on his fair young face. Then, as Rivers sprang to his feet, the boy's face became deadly pale, and he almost gasped out the words:—"Is my father dead?"

I did not answer; but stood with bowed head, mine eyes upon the floor; for I could not bear to hurt this young innocent with my cruel news.

The poor boy burst into a flood of tears, and buried his head beneath the arm of his uncle, who spake most kindly unto him, and tried to quiet him with soothing words.

Meantime I walked to the far end of the room and there, I feel no shame in the telling of it, I wiped mine eyes, which were by no means dry. The sight of this poor little fatherless King stole my manhood from me, and I wept.

I have no recollection of any other man ever having raised himself so much in mine estimation, in so short a time, as did Lord Rivers, when comforting our little Sovereign. I had always heard that he was a kind-hearted gentleman, and one of great refinement and education; but I had never known him, except most slightly. The kind and gentle manner of the man drew me to him at once.

"Weep not, my dear," said he. "I know how thy heart must ache for the loss of so noble and kind a parent. Be assured, Edward, we all do feel the loss most keenly. But think of thy poor mother, and how she must ache at heart. Re-

member, now it is your duty to comfort her. 'A great responsibility hath fallen upon thee. Think of that and call up thy courage and determination. Remember the motto which I taught to thee:—'Do but screw up thy resolution, and all things can be overcome;' yea, even thy sorrow."

So he kept on, until he had quieted the child, which sat himself down and, resting his chin upon his hand, gazed thoughtfully out of the window.

I could read the boy's thought. He was looking far away to Windsor, and the Palace there. He saw his mother and his dear father as he had last seen them. His sire took him in his arms and kissed him, ere he mounted his little palfrey to ride to Ludlow with his uncle. And now all should be changed. When he should arrive at the Palace his mother alone would meet him, and there would be tears in her eyes. I knew his mind was drawing the sad picture: and yet, had he but known what the reality was to be, he had rather stayed where he was, safe with his uncle, on the borders of Wales—of which he had heretofore been the Prince, but was now its King—than to have returned unto his mother. Then his Majesty moved, and this did break my reverie. I remembered my mission; so I walked across the room to Rivers, and handed him the Queen's letter, with an expression of regret for my forgetfulness. He waved mine apologies aside, with the best show of grace, thus showing his smooth and

gentle nature. Indeed, during all the too short time I had the pleasure in being in this man's company I never saw him lose temper: and yet, remember, he was one of England's ablest warriors.

"What meaneth this?" he broke out suddenly. "'Levy an army, and march to London with the King, my son,'" he read aloud. "Why, Sir Walter, are things not well at Windsor?"

"As well as may be, under the circumstances," I replied. "His Royal Highness, the Duke of Gloucester, was appointed Protector by the late King, shortly before the noble Edward's death."

"So her Majesty informs me," he interrupted.

"How acts Lord Hastings?"

"He seems to be uncommon friendly with the Prince, my lord."

"So I thought, so I thought," said he, speaking more unto himself than me.

"And what about Buckingham?" he asked, as he stopped suddenly in his walking back and forth across the room, with his head bent upon his chest, and his hands clasped behind him.

"He seems most friendly with the Duke of Gloucester; in fact they are inseparable." Then did I think it wise to tell him of the conversation that I had overheard. So I beckoned him to come unto the far end of the room, that the young King might not be alarmed by what I had to tell. I repeated it word for word as I had heard it; for

it was so graven upon my memory that it can never be erased.

He listened attentively until I had finished, and then said in that quiet manner which so well became him:—"Bradley, there may be trouble afoot; however, we cannot be too cautious. I need not warn thee to keep thine own counsel. This is a dangerous time for England; one false step might cause irreparable damage." And then he asked me every question he could think of; and had ye but known him you might have had some idea of that number, which was indeed great.

The King kindly invited me to sup with them that night. Sir Richard Grey, one of her Majesty's sons by her first husband, was also present at supper.

Soon after the meal the young King retired; but we sat up late, and discussed the affairs of state, and laid plans for the levying of the forces to escort the King to London. Lord Rivers and Grey both seemed to fear that Richard did intend to take the young King away from their control and influence, unless they took a sufficient force to make such a step impossible. On this I did not express an opinion; for who could tell what move a man like Gloucester might make.

The next morning orders were sent out through several counties to raise troops.

When these commenced coming in, Lord Rivers, Sir Richard Grey and I were kept busy in-

specting them and getting them properly equipped.

By the end of one week we had an army of above ten thousand men ready to march with our little Sovereign, and others were coming in with every hour that passed.

One evening we held a council at which it was decided to start for London on the second day following.

The next day, about the hour of noon, a gentleman arrived at the Castle and requested an audience with the Lord Rivers. We were at dinner when he arrived; so he was informed that his audience would be granted so soon as my lord had finished his repast.

The gentleman sent back word that he came from Windsor, as the messenger of the Queen.

When Rivers heard this he arose hurriedly and ordered him to be admitted at once.

Imagine my surprise when in walked Harleston.

He had never met Lord Rivers, so I presented him.

He handed a packet to his lordship, with the words:—"From the Queen, my lord."

Rivers tore open the packet in great excitement, and as he read its contents I saw a cloud of disappointment pass over his brilliant features. Grey went over to his uncle, and read the letter over the other's shoulder. When he had finished, his

features wore the same look as did his uncle's, except that they also showed strong traces of anger.

"Well, Bradley," at length said Rivers, "our work hath been for nought. We are commanded, here, to have the army disbanded, and to take only a sufficient retinue to support the dignity of our young King."

"Then things have brightened?" I asked.

He shook his head sadly. "No, on the contrary, the prospect looks much darker. I only hope that I may be mistaken; but I do fear we shall have trouble in England, unless the nobles cease their wrangling."

Shortly after he and Grey retired, and, as Harleston had not yet dined, we sat at table; and whilst he ate he told me of the doings at court since I had left. And these, as you shall hear, were of importance to the kingdom.

CHAPTER XI

SOME HAPPENINGS AT WINDSOR

I NOW go back to relate that which happened at Windsor, after I had left for Ludlow. What I am now about to put down was told to me, partly by Harleston, as we sat in my rooms in Ludlow Castle, and partly by Hazel, when next I saw her.

I had only been gone one day when Gloucester called to see the Queen. When he was admitted he saluted her Majesty in the most respectful and kindly manner, and spoke in that smooth and diplomatic way of which he so well knew the potency. "My dear sister," said he, "I have not come to thee before to-day, because I knew full well how useless, and even cruel, it is to speak of affairs of state to one whose heart hath so recently been caused to bleed, by the loss of a husband which was, and whose memory ever shall be, so dear to thee, and to us all. But now, my poor widowed sister, it is thy duty to bethink thee of thy son. He should be sent for, and be conducted here forthwith, in order that he may be crowned with proper expediency and pomp. Methought it was not well to let this matter stand too

long; for we must not forget that Lancaster still doth cast a longing eye upon the crown of England. 'Twas but yester e'en I heard that they were corresponding with that bastard, which calls himself the Earl of Richmond."

"Then I did well when I sent word unto my brother to levy a strong force and conduct my son to London," said the Queen, with a look of anxiety.

Gloucester seemed taken aback for a moment; but, quickly recovering himself, he said:—"I did not know that your Majesty had so instructed Lord Rivers; and indeed I do not know that this is the wisest course. The people of the City may not like to see this armed force thus march on London, as though the King's person were not safe without this strong protection. Thinkest thou it had not been better to have consulted with Lord Hastings, and some others, before taking a step so important to the peace of the kingdom? When didst thou so instruct thy brother?"

"But yesterday I sent him a letter by a trusted officer," answered the Queen, quite innocent, and put off her guard by the oily tongue and kindly manner of this deceitful hypocrite.

"What dost thou say? Shall we sound Lord Hastings, and have the benefit of his opinion before Lord Rivers doth proceed too far with his preparations?"

The Queen, suspecting nothing, walked into

this trap, set with such cunning by the Duke (for well he knew the view that Hastings would take of such a measure) and consented to this course.

So soon as Gloucester had left the Queen he despatched two messengers, one to Buckingham, and the other to Hastings.

When these noblemen arrived they were conducted into the presence of the Protector. "Well, my friends," said Gloucester, when he had greeted them, "the Queen hath gained a march on us. Her Majesty seems determined to still rule England. She now intends to do it through her son, the young Edward, as she hath heretofore done through her husband, the older one."

"What dost thou mean, my lord?" asked Hastings; who, though an honest man, yet disliked the Queen, or rather, was jealous of her power.

Then Gloucester told them of his interview with the Queen, and the message she had sent to Lord Rivers.

When he had finished speaking, Buckingham broke out:—"By Heaven!" said he, "if her Majesty has Rivers march on London, as though it were the stronghold of a band of outlaws, he shall be met with a force stronger than his own." Then speaking to Lord Hastings, he said, whilst he pointed to Richard:—"Here sits the Lord Protector, which was appointed the guardian of the King by the boy's late lamented father; and

the Queen and her brother take it upon themselves to assume his office, and to issue orders for the raising of an army, without his consent, or even knowledge; 'tis monstrous! What sayest thou, my Lord Hastings? Should they not be made to answer for this insult to our Royal Protector?"

Then Richard put in a cunning word for himself. "Yes, it seems as though I am quite forgot. By Saint Paul, I have no love for the office; but sith it was put upon me, by my dear dead brother, I do consider it my duty to fulfill the trust he then reposed in me."

This last stroke brought Hastings to their side. "By the light of Heaven!" cried he, "unless this order be countermanded, myself will return to the government of Calais, and the whole damn kingdom may rot ere I will ever serve under a government led by the Queen and her upstart kinsmen."

"Then, my friends, ye think it best for me to inform the Queen that we do not consider it a wise step on her part to thus make show of force, which the people of the City would consider a slur upon their loyalty," said Richard, in his softest tones.

"Indeed, my lord, had I the saying of it, I would not put it in such gentle terms," said Buckingham; "what dost thou say, Lord Hastings? Were it not better that we tell the Queen

and her following, in no fixed, courteous phrases, that we—the ancient nobility of England—will not put up with such treatment at their hands?"

To this the Chancellor replied in the affirmative; so Richard made another call upon the Queen and, after telling her the result of his conversation with Hastings (he having taken care not to mention Buckingham's name) asked the Queen what answer he might have the honor to take to the Chancellor.

Now whilst Gloucester had been consulting with Buckingham and Hastings (which conversation I have just put down, and which I had from Harleston, who got it from a page, which had been concealed in the room whilst they were talking) the Queen had been consulting with her son, the Marquis of Dorset, and was therefore resolved to hold firmly unto her plans.

"Tell Lord Hastings that I will not countermand the order I have sent unto my brother."

"But, madam, he threatens to return to Calais unless this be done."

"What! doth he threaten? Let him go to Calais, and there may he abide; methinks that England can manage without him better than can he without her;" and the Queen, as she said these words, arose and looked like a defiant lioness defending her cub.

"It is my poor opinion that thou art making a mistake in thus opposing a man of such influence;

however, I will tell Lord Hastings that your Majesty hath fully made up your mind to not withdraw the order."

Hazel, who was present during this interview, told me that Richard, as he said this speech, looked so kind and gentle that it was well nigh impossible for her to believe what I had told her of his cruelty.

This wrangling went on for a whole week.

Gloucester was always careful to not bring himself into any of these disputes; but to place himself as the messenger from one side to the other.

At length one day Gloucester brought word to the Queen that Hastings had decided to himself take up arms and forcibly prevent Lord Rivers from escorting the young King to London, with an army.

This was the final blow. The poor Queen could resist no longer; so she consented to write to her brother and instruct him to bring only a sufficient retinue to sustain the dignity of the King, who was to be brought unto Westminster Palace, where the Queen would be ere her little son did there arrive.

Harleston was chosen as her messenger; so that was how it came about that he followed me to Ludlow.

* * * * * *

Now I will tell of other matters which happened whilst I was absent from court; and this part, although it does not bear on history, was of the utmost importance to me; for it was but the prologue to the history of my greatest troubles, as ye shall learn anon.

The second morning after I had left Windsor, Hazel, feeling quiet, as she afterwards told me, strolled out into the park, that she might be alone. She seated herself in a secluded place beneath a beech tree, whose fresh new garments were fluttering in the soft and tender breeze of Spring. Bright and young were they, as she; yet why did not she feel as bright as did those green, fluttering young leaves o'er head? Still she did not, and her heart felt heavy and weary. Remember, this was the day after Gloucester's two interviews with the Queen, and she felt an inspiration which told her that trouble was brewing.

Looking back, she thought how happy her life had been before King Edward's death had cast a gloom o'er everything. She could not help thinking that the life at court would now be very different. Instead of the Queen having her way, the nobles, no longer held in check by the firm hand of Edward, would have control of everything. Here was the King scarce buried, and already Hastings had commenced to show his authority. All the life would be gone from the court, and instead of the round of amusements

that the Queen had kept agoing, every thing should now be quiet, morose and cold.

How she did wish that I were back. She wondered when I would return, and if I still intended to remain at court, or would I ask her to fulfil the promise she had made me, to some day meet me at the altar. Indeed she wished the time would soon fly past till I should again return.

With these and kindred thoughts she had been so taken up that she had not heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

"Oh! I am so tired of this life at court. I wish I were away from it," said she, speaking aloud.

"Indeed I agree with thee, Lady Hazel. 'Tis not the life which best suits thee nor me."

She turned with a start and there, leaning over the back of the bench upon which she was sitting, stood Catesby. A smile was upon his face as he noted her startled expression. His right arm he still carried in a sling, and the sleeve of his doublet hung loose at his side.

"Well, sir, by what right dost thou come aspying upon ladies?" asked Hazel, as she arose and gazed upon him haughtily, and curled her lip in scorn.

"'Twas Cupid led me here, fair lady. Deform not that lovely mouth with such a scornful sneer; those lips of thine were never made

for other purpose than the tender work of kissing." Then, as she turned her back and started to leave him, he hurried around the bench and stood in front of her, thus compelling her to stop.

"Stand aside, thou impudent cur, or thou shalt regret thine act," said Hazel, as she commenced to be frightened.

"Why, thou wilt not kill me with those flashes from thine eyes?" asked the scoundrel, as he stood and smiled in her face.

"No, but thou shalt answer for it to the one which made thee to wear thine arm, as best becomes thee—in a noose, and where thy neck should be."

"Ho, ho! sets the wind there? I might have known so much," said he, as he sneered, and shrugged his one sound shoulder.

"Be assured sir, thou shalt know more ere thou hast heard the last of this," said my dear maid, as she again turned to leave the knave.

"Nay, not so fast, my fair one. In sooth you escape not so;" and he tried to seize her by the arm.

But Hazel was now thoroughly frightened, and she avoided his hand and commenced to run. He sprang after her and caught her firmly by the wrist; but she, seeing that she was fairly caught, struggled like a tigress, and broke loose. Hotly did he pursue her, and again tried to seize her

arm. She, however, swung quickly around a large oak. In following he struck his wounded shoulder against the tree; the wound, but partly healed, must have broken open afresh, for, with a groan, he fell down in a faint, as though by the hand of God. Hazel got but a glimpse of him as he fell; for she slackened not her pace until she reached her room and threw herself upon her bed, and burst out aweeping.

Gentle cousin Mary at last succeeded in comforting her; but after that the dear maids did not again walk in that park, until some great changes had been wrought at court, and throughout all England; and then, when they did go, they were guests, without attachment to the court.

Mary had told Harleston all about Hazel's experience with Catesby; so it was from him that I heard it.

When he had finished I leaped to my feet and swore an oath, which methinks it best not to set down in writ, as it might not have a good effect upon the morals of some of my younger grandsons.

"Calmly, my friend, calmly," said Frederick, in his quiet way; "have patience; thou shalt yet have an opportunity for making the scoundrel pay dearly for his act."

"Hell and furies! Harleston, speak not to me of being calm. Do but think of that dear girl being subject to such insults. By Heaven I swear

I shall never rest in peace until I have caused his death!" and I tore about the room, stamping my feet, and overturning whatever furniture I did come across. "Heaven, why are such dogs permitted to live? Harleston, I would give my right hand to but have that low-lived knave by the throat." Here I clasped my hands, in a grip of steel and tried to imagine that I held him by the neck. 'Twas my wounded arm that stopped me from this practice.

When my passion had somewhat abated my friend asked me when I thought it likely that Lord Rivers would take the King to London.

"Indeed I know not," I replied; "but one thing is certain, and that is if he does not start at once I will set out alone. I cannot bear to think of what might happen unto my poor dear girl, whilst I am away from her side. That Catesby dare do anything; and that rogue, Gloucester, would back him up in all his villainy; for he hath been mighty friendly with the accursed dog of late. I know not what his object may be; but as I think, he doth intend to use him in order that he may win Hasting's friendship.

We spent the greater part of that afternoon in walking through the town of Ludlow, which Harleston had never seen before.

That night we sat up until a late hour, and talked of all the strange actions of those in power, and made surmises as to what the next move

should be; but even our pessimistic predictions fell far short of the reality.

When at length I fell asleep I had fully made up my mind to ask Lord Rivers, early the next morning, for his permission to leave for London that day, as I had private business to attend to.

However, many strange things did happen ere I did again see Hazel.

CHAPTER XII

GLOUCESTER SHOWS HIS HAND

WHEN I asked Lord Rivers for permission to return to the court before he should start with the King, he replied:—"Why, Bradley, we are to leave to-morrow morning; and unless your affairs cannot wait one day more, I would have you accompany his Majesty."

"In that case, my lord," said I, "one day more can make but little difference, so I shall wait. I did not know your lordship did intend to set out so soon."

Early the next morning—in fact ere day-break—we started for London with a goodly train, though not an army. Almost every man in the King's retinue was a gentleman, he having but a small body of men-at-arms. This made it possible for us to travel at a rapid pace, as the whole following was mounted.

About a score of gentlemen went first; then followed the King, riding betwixt his uncle and his half brother. Harleston and I rode immediately behind his Majesty, and we were followed by a score of other gentlemen, and the men-at-arms brought up the rear.

At every hamlet which we did pass through, the people lined each side of the road and cheered and blessed their young King. The boy, pleased with these demonstrations, soon wore an empty purse, in place of its being well filled, as when we started on our journey.

I had thought our progress should have been greater, and therefore was impatient with what I considered its slowness, though in reality we were travelling rapidly, considering the number of the retinue.

Messengers were sent ahead to inform the authorities of the different towns that their young Sovereign would soon pass through, so that the townsfolk might have a passing glimpse of the child. In several of these places we were compelled to stop for refreshments, and then the King acknowledged, most briefly, the demonstrations in his honour. Then would we hasten on, that we might make up for the time thus lost.

On the fourth afternoon a horseman, covered with dust, as though he had ridden hard and far, met us. When he drew rein he dismounted and kneeled in the road before the King, with a great show of respect. When asked his business, he arose and replied by handing a packet unto Lord Rivers, with the words:—"From his Royal Highness, the Duke of Gloucester."

Rivers hastily opened the missive and, after glancing hurriedly over its contents, said to the

messenger:—"Tell His Royal Highness, with my compliments, that his wish shall be carried out."

The messenger re-mounted and—as fast as his steed would carry him—rode back the way he came.

"What says the letter, uncle?" asked his Majesty, when we were again on our way.

"He informs me that he and the Duke of Buckingham, attended by a noble train, await your Majesty at Northampton," replied his uncle.

So we rode on in silence for some time, till Rivers again spoke. "I fear, Edward," said he, "that Northampton will be over crowded, if we all do go there. The night will then be fallen, and we shall be compelled to spend it there, in case we go. Methinks it would be better for thee and thy retinue to take the road to Stony Stratford, and there spend the night, whilst I, and some few others, go to the Prince and explain this change of plan."

"As thou wilt, uncle," returned the King. So it was decided that the King should proceed by another road to Stony Stratford. Lord Rivers then asked Harleston and me to accompany him to Northampton.

When we came to the parting of the ways, and the young Edward was to separate from his uncle, he put his slender arms around River's neck and embraced him most affectionately. Little did he

guess what was in store for his dear relative and teacher.

The sun was now getting low, so we proceeded rapidly on our journey.

When we were yet about a mile from Northampton we were met by Gloucester and Buckingham, attended by about a score of gentlemen of their following. The sun had been for some time set, and the earth was busily engaged with drawing on her black sleeping-robe. We rode almost into the Prince's party ere we did recognize them. Rivers at once made himself known, and thus addressed Gloucester:—"I must ask pardon from your Royal Highness for having taken the liberty of sending the King on to Stony Stratford, there to spend the night. I feared Northampton could not accommodate his Majesty's retinue—which is large—together with thy following, and his Grace of Buckingham's."

"No excuses are necessary from my Lord Rivers," said Gloucester; and he smiled most graciously, and extended his hand to the Earl. Buckingham followed his leader's example and welcomed Rivers as though he had been a lost brother whom he loved. Then they both received my friend and me in a polite, and but little less hearty manner.

"And now," said the Prince, "let us make haste and have our supper. By Saint Paul! my innards this night seem most rebellious, and call

out loudly for more of life's ammunition. Follow me, gentlemen, and ye shall not have long to wait." So saying he drove his spurs into his horse's flanks, and dashed forward in the direction of Northampton. We followed rapidly; but we had to urge our tired steeds to their utmost, in order that we might keep the Duke in sight.

When we at length drew rein it was in front of the best inn that this city could then afford; though, since that time, more pretentious ones have been erected. The Royal banner of England floated lazily from its support in the yard in front of the inn.

When we had entered Gloucester dismissed all the gentlemen of his train. Buckingham—as was his custom in everything—followed the example of the Prince. Harleston and I were about to depart with the other gentlemen, but Gloucester stopped us with:—"No, by Saint Paul! ye two shall sup with us; I have not yet forgot how speedy were my messengers. Richard of Gloucester forgets not his friends. Why, if a man sups not with his friends, with whom may he eat? What dost thou say, my Lord of Rivers?"

"Indeed, my lord, thou dost honour us over much by calling us your friends," said the Earl. He evidently did not know what to make of the Duke's open-hearted manner; and for that, no more did I.

"Why, I am certain ye are not mine enemies;

therefore ye must be friends," said Richard. He was laughing now, and acting as though Rivers had ever been the best friend he had on Earth.

"I meant not that, my Lord," said the King's uncle; "I have ever accounted myself among thy faithful servants."

"Nay, not so," replied the Prince. "Because it happened that I had the misfortune to be born so high it does not follow that all men must be my servants. What! wouldst thou deprive me of the privilege which the meanest slave may have, take away my dear friends, and turn them into servants? God forfend!" said he solemnly, as he clasped his hands and turned his eyes to Heaven. "No, let me to-night be plain Gloucester. Let no man call me Prince. To-night I'll have none of, 'Your Royal Highness,' or, 'Your Grace,' or, 'My Lord Duke,' or, 'My Lord,' or anything that might indicate a title. This must ye swear solemnly, or I will take it that ye do not love me. Come now, swear that ye four will not address me this evening by other name than 'Gloucester.'"

So we all laughingly did what he had asked. I could not explain this jovial conduct by other means than that the Prince and Buckingham had been wetting their palates too freely ere they rode forth to meet us.

We did not leave the table until the bell had rung out the hour of midnight.

"Gloucester," said I—for so we all did call him —"wouldst thou not like a game at dice?"

"In faith I would that same, my friend," replied the Prince.

So we went back to the table and played until the sun began to flash its rays against the fragments of ragged clouds and set them all ablaze.

I won rapidly from the Duke, and when we left the table my purse contained every gold piece that he had with him, besides some that he had borrowed from Buckingham, who did not play.

Richard took his losses all in good part.

"Why, Bradley, thou art a veritable giant at the dice. I have been told that my fortune at the game is good; but thou dost put me to shame." And so he rattled on, showing nothing but his overflow of spirit.

Now and then would he turn to Lord Rivers and enquire how he did fare with Harleston.

My friend had no such good fortune as had I. When he left the table he and Rivers stood about the same as when we started.

"Thou hast won everything, Bradley, and I shall have to call again on thee, good cousin, that I may give the honest man which owns this house a befitting present," and he turned to Buckingham for more gold.

"But now we must have breakfast and then proceed to join the King at Stony Stratford," said he, as we left the table.

Whilst breakfast was being prepared we went to bathe our eyes, which felt anything but sound after our all night's carouse. Then Harleston and I strolled forth into the chill, bracing air of morning.

"I fear we have misjudged the Prince," said I, as we strolled, arm in arm, about the yard.

"Remember, Bradley," my friend replied, "he may have an object in acting as he hath done."

"What object could he have in thus making us his equals?" I asked.

"So far I cannot tell," replied my friend, solemnly; "yet when a man of Gloucester's stamp appears most pleasant he is most dangerous. I may be doing him a wrong, but I cannot help but fear that there is some great game about to be played, and Gloucester will play in it a leading part. I forget not what thou didst overhear the night of the ball. Remember," he added, "it is not for ourselves I fear; it is for those far above us."

"Thou mayst be right," said I, "but, for myself, I must confess I do begin to not so much dislike the man."

"Place not great trust in a Prince's smile," returned Harleston.

By this time the gentlemen in attendance on the Prince and Buckingham commenced to arrive from their different quarters; so we were com-

pelled to stop this conversation. We reëntered the house and joined the others at table.

Gloucester still continued his friendly manner and all through breakfast kept up a string of pleasant speeches.

Buckingham spoke but seldom, but when he did it was ever in the same strain as the Prince.

At length Gloucester asked in a careless manner:—"Is the King attended by a sufficient retinue to sustain the dignity of one in such an exalted position? Had it not been for the strong opposition of that most turbulent noble—Lord Hastings—his Majesty should have come with an army, as the Queen, cousin of Buckingham and I wished," he added, before Rivers had time for making reply.

"As for his Majesty's train," replied the Earl, "it is not great in numbers; but is composed, almost entirely, of gentlemen of no mean blood. We had an army almost complete when the news came that there was strong opposition to this plan."

Methought I noticed a trace of suspicion in Rivers' face as he made this reply; but if it had been there at all it left as quickly as it came.

Harleston, however, gave one quick glance, and mine old opinion of our host returned with a redoubled force.

"Well," said Richard, "cousin Buckingham and I have no mean following, and when it is

added to that which already attends his Majesty methinks that Lord Hastings had best keep his tongue betwixt his teeth, and his sword in his scabbard, when we enter London.

"But now 'tis time that we set out for Stony Stratford. No doubt his Majesty will be impatient to be off to London, and to see his mother."

We then started forth upon our way; Richard and Rivers riding side by side, whilst Buckingham rode betwixt Harleston and me.

It was an ideal morning; the sun was shining clear and bright; the air was of a coolness which made it comfortable to ride. However, we had not been long upon the road when a haze climbed up the eastern sky, and spread its gauzy curtain betwixt the sun and us. At first it was scarcely perceptible; but it was not long ere the sun had been so thoroughly draped as to be completely blotted out.

In the meantime we had been proceeding leisurely on our journey. Gloucester talked with Rivers in most friendly manner. As we were directly behind them we could not help but overhear a part of their conversation.

"How do we now stand with France?" asked Rivers.

"Not so friendly as might be," replied the Prince. "Before my brother died, he had intended making war upon old Louis. This hath

angered them; but soon I do hope to be again on good terms with the old scare-crow."

"When dost thou think of having the young King crowned?" asked the Earl.

"Methinks 'twere good to have it done so soon as all necessary arrangements can be completed," replied Richard. And so the conversation ran, until the rain commenced to fall like the tears of children, in large and scattered drops. This caused us to quicken our pace, and so made all conversation impossible. Then the rain poured down in torrents, and caused our clothes to cling unto our backs in a most uncomfortable manner. The vapour arose from the hot bodies of our horses, and gave our train the appearance of a phantom cavalcade, as we dashed forward at full speed, that we might reach a place of shelter. However, as is ever the case, when at last we came in sight of our destination—Stony Stratford—the sun had burnt through the clouds which screened it, and again shone forth in all its splendour. So we slackened our pace, and the conversation started afresh, as the sun's rays began to dry our backs, and cheer us with its welcome warmth.

As we drew near the town in which the young King and his following had spent the night we noticed a considerable procession filing slowly out of the place and coming in our direction.

"What may they be?" asked Gloucester.

"They must be of the King's train, and they come forth to meet us," replied Lord Rivers.

We soon met them. They were led by Sir Richard Grey, and Sir Thomas Vaughan rode by his side. The others consisted of about a score or more of gentlemen of the King's train, and a body of the men-at-arms who had accompanied us from Ludlow.

"What means this, Lord Rivers; an armed force sent out to meet me, as though I were an enemy to the King?" cried Richard, angrily.

"Why, Gloucester, they come—"

"What! speakest thou to me as Gloucester?" cried Richard, as he turned fiercely upon the Earl, who sat staring in surprise, as did Harleston and I, at this strange and unprovoked outburst.

When Gloucester spoke this last sentence a body of men, with drawn swords, quickly surrounded Rivers, Grey and Vaughan, and took them prisoners.

"Best keep your tongues betwixt your teeth," whispered Buckingham, first to me and then to Harleston. There was an amused smile upon his face as he said this.

Then the whole plot flashed through my mind. This then was Gloucester's reason for entertaining us so well. We had been used but as blinds to throw Lord Rivers off his guard, and make him to trust the Prince. This then was the reason

we had been made to be so familiar; it was in order that Gloucester when he chose to consider it a personal slight might do so. Harleston was right; Gloucester had an object in view when he acted so. But for that matter, when did this man ever so much as speak one kindly word, but for his profit.

Now, though it takes me some moments to put these things down, it did not take so many heart-beats for them to be enacted; and remember, my heart was working fast just then.

When the swords had been taken from these three gentlemen they were separated, and soldiers, with naked swords, stationed themselves one on either side of each prisoner.

"Now off with the traitorous knaves to Pomfret," commanded Richard. "There let them close prisoners rest, until thou hearest from me." This he said to Sir Richard Ratcliffe, who seemed to be in command of the soldiers which had so suddenly appeared.

Ratcliffe put himself in advance of the guard and set out on his way to Pomfret Castle.

Grey's and Vaughan's escorts now joined meekly in with the train of Gloucester, and we proceeded leisurely into Stony Stratford.

I know not when I have, before that day or since, been so disgusted by the traitorous deceit of a man as I was by Gloucester's.

So soon as Rivers and his friends had been

taken off the Prince again put on his pleasant habit. He laughed and chatted with Buckingham as though he greatly relished his contemptible act.

As we rode along I began to form a plan by which I might inform the Queen of the arrest of her brother and son; for I now began to fear for the safety of her Majesty. When Gloucester dare arrest, and throw into prison, men occupying positions which Rivers, Grey and Vaughan held, it looked to me as though the Queen herself might be the next person to be put under restraint. This thought was still tormenting me when we drew rein in front of the house occupied by the little King.

When young Edward saw his uncle Richard, he came forward, and the two embraced with a great show of affection. "Ah, your Majesty, let me be the first member of our noble house of York to congratulate and welcome thee on thy return homeward."

"Thanks, for the welcome, uncle," returned the King; "but for the congratulations I cannot speak. 'Tis but a sad home-coming, when I know that my dear father cannot be there to meet me."

"Think not of that," said his uncle. "Thou knowest that we all must lose our fathers; the old must pass away, and the young take their places. Thy grief, no doubt, is great; but bethink you of your duty. Thou must be prepared to rule this

fair kingdom as did thy father, with an iron hand. A King is ever surrounded by traitors. 'Twas but this morning that I learned of a plot against thine authority, and, though some of those connected with the movement have, till to-day, been friends of mine, yet was I compelled to do my duty and cause them to be arrested. By Saint Paul! I swear I cannot yet believe them guilty; though by their acts they have caused the dark eye of suspicion to frown upon them.

"To whom dost thou refer, uncle?"

"Why, to those that thou wouldst least suspect," said Richard. "Thine own uncle—Lord Rivers—thy cousin—Sir Richard Grey—and Sir Thomas Vaughan."

"And where are they now?" asked the young King, with alarm.

"I had them sent to Pomfret Castle, that they might do no damage to your Majesty. Of course," he added, "when thou art crowned your Majesty must do with them as thou thinkest best."

"Indeed I will release them the moment that I do sit upon the throne," exclaimed the King, with great heat.

I heard no more of that which followed, for Richard led the little King into a private room, whither Buckingham followed them. I then took Harleston to a place where no one might over-

hear our conversation, and told to him my plan of going to London to warn the Queen.

When I had finished my friend thought for some moments ere he remarked on my plan. "No, it should be dangerous for thee to go," said he; "Thou shouldst be missed, and then you might find yourself in the company of Rivers, at Pomfret."

"What then dost thou suggest?" I asked. "Her Majesty must be warned."

"Yes, her Majesty must be warned," he replied, musingly. "Ah! I have it," said he, speaking rapidly. "Send some faithful servant with a letter unto the Queen. Do but tell her that the three have been arrested; sign not thy name, for fear it fall into the wrong hands. A common soldier will not be missed, whereas Sir Walter Bradley should be."

But then I thought of a plan that was better than my friend's; so I retired to a private place, and wrote the following letter, which is now—through the person to whom it was addressed not following a part of mine instructions,—in my possession, and which I hope ye will always preserve after I have gone to join those whose doings I am putting down.

" With the King, at Stony Stratford.

" LADY HAZEL WOODVILLE;

" Lady-in-waiting to Her Majesty the Queen, at Westminster.

" Perfectest of maids and truest of sweethearts; I send thee this message that its contents may not be seen by eyes not to be trusted. No one can suspect this packet to contain news of the greatest importance to the kingdom.

" So soon as thou dost receive this go to the Queen, and tell her that her brother—Lord Rivers—Sir Richard Grey, and Sir Thomas Vaughan, were all three arrested, by order of Duke Richard, as we were entering this place to-day. No offence had been committed by any of these gentlemen. They were at once sent under a strong guard to the Castle of Pomfret. Also tell her Majesty that last night the Duke of Gloucester entertained Lord Rivers, Sir Frederick and me, at supper, and throughout the evening he showed us all prodigious favours. Therefore his conduct is all the more difficult to understand, if he doth mean to be just.

" I send this by a servant which—though I have not known him long—has hitherto been faithful; though now it doth seem hard to trust anyone.

" Pray God that the clouds of trouble may soon pass over, and the sun of happiness again shine forth.

" I expect to soon be again upon the road to London; but our progress, methinks, will not be great.

"Destroy this letter when thou shalt have read it.

"I remain, dearest, thy servant unto death,—

"WALTER."

When I had finished this letter I went in search of one of the men which had gone with me to Ludlow. He was the gigantic and good natured Irishman, whose honest and determined face made me to select him in preference to either of his companions, who were better known to me.

"Michael," said I, when I at length found him, "I wish thee to take this packet, and set out for Westminster Palace at once. Spare not thy horse. When thou hast come into the Palace enquire for the Lady Hazel Woodville. Hand her this packet. That is a part of thy duty. The other part is for thee to make sure that thou speakest not of thy message or journey, to anyone."

"In faith, yer honour, ye may dipind on me fer speed and a close mouth. Oi'll be thare as soon as could the divil, with all his wings; and as fer sacrecy, uh! sure, the damned thumb screws thimsilves could no more draw a wourd through moy teeth than, as the priests sez, ye could pull a camel through the houle in a nadle."

I could not help but smile at the extravagance of his speech; but I put down my head as I fumbled with my purse, for it is not good policy

to laugh at one which is about to carry your life in his hand. "Here is gold for thee, that thou mayest not want for aught upon thy way," and I handed him the full of my hand of Gloucester's easily won gold pieces. I knew that this would lend him the wings of Mercury, and would tie his mouth more tightly; and so it did.

"Hivin bliss yer honour!" said he. "Whoy, Oi can buy out the houle o' London with sich a fortune."

So the faithful fellow mounted his horse and rode off at such a goodly pace as left no doubt in my mind that my message would reach Hazel in time for the Queen to take whatever action she might think best.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FLIGHT FROM THE PALACE

HAZEL was with Mary in their own apartments when she received word that a messenger desired to see her.

"Bid him give thee the message, and do thou bring it here," said Hazel.

The servant went out, but soon returned. "The soldier, madam, doth refuse to put the packet into other hands than thine," said the maid.

"What may this mean?" thought Hazel. "Surely this must be of vast importance," said she to Mary.

"Mayhap 'tis best that thou shouldst see him," said Mary.

The two maids walked down the passage to where the man was standing, cap in hand, and as motionless as a pile of armour. However, when he saw the ladies approaching he started forward and, dropping on one knee, he handed the packet to the proper maid, though how he knew her I cannot understand. But then those fellows about the Palace have naught to do but learn who people are and all about them.

"Here is a gold piece for thee," said Hazel, as she reached it toward him.

"No, yer ladyship," he replied, "Oi thank thee much fer thoine offer; but moy master hath alridy given me so much o' the pricious stuff that it's thinkin' Oi am to know what to do with it." With this he saluted them smartly and walked away.

"What is it, Hazel?" asked Mary, when Michael was gone.

Hazel, however, was so deeply engaged with the reading of my letter that she did not hear her companion; so Mary leaned on her friend's shoulder, and read it for herself.

Neither said anything until they had read twice what was writ. "What can it all mean?" asked Mary, at last. Then she read aloud, as though the sound of her voice might make the meaning clearer, as it sometimes doth.

"Hush!" said Hazel, as she put her hand over her friend's mouth; "dost thou not see that he commands me to keep this most secret? Come, let us to the Queen, and tell her all."

So they went to her Majesty's apartments; she was talking with her daughter Elizabeth when they entered. "What causes thee to look so troubled, Hazel?" asked the Queen, the moment that they had entered; for my dear girl was badly frightened by the contents of my note.

"I have just received a letter which is of great

import to thee," answered the maiden; and she handed the Queen the open packet; for her fear had robbed her of any bashfulness she might have felt in having her Majesty see the manner in which I did address her.

The Queen read and reread the letter through, from first to last. At length she seemed to realize the terrible meaning of it all. "Oh! that accursed, hump-back knave, to dare to lift his hand against those which guard and protect the King! No peace shall I now have. He will not stop with Rivers. I shall be the next to feel his tyranny. But I will match him yet!" she cried.

"Send for my son, the Marquis of Dorset," said she, as her eyes flashed and her face became as though carved from marble.

When Dorset arrived, and heard from his mother what had happened to his uncle and his brother, he showed his anger less; but in his cold grey eyes, and firm cut mouth, one might read even greater determination than his mother possessed together with all her quickness of perception.

"Methinks, mother," said he at length, "that thou hadst best leave the Palace, and take refuge in the Sanctuary yonder. Take with thee my dear sisters and our little Prince. Whilst he is not in the power of the boar young Edward shall be safe."

"You counsel well, my son," replied the Queen.

"Let us then make haste, and be in safety ere the traitorous cur arrives. Girls, ye must accompany us. Go and make ready, with all expediency, for in haste alone now lies our safety." This latter she addressed to Hazel and Mary, who had remained in the room whilst these things were taking place.

"Oh, Richard," said the Queen, as though he were there before her, "thou shalt suffer for this act of thine! Thou thinkest that by taking from the King the only man in England capable of training his gentle mind in the properest course thou shalt be able to infuse thy murderous thoughts into this helpless innocent, and so use him to thy profit. The curse of poor old Margaret is now falling upon me, and her prophecy is coming true. But yet," she added, as though to herself, "she cursed him also. Oh, why hath not her curses first fallen upon him; I never did her wrong. Ah, yes, this is my punishment for having caused poor Clarence's death. Would to God it had been this limping dog that I had asked for, dead. Then all should have been well. Clarence was gentle, and never did me harm. 'Tis indeed God's curse for my climbing to great heights upon the necks of others that has now fallen upon my head, and bent it low. Where I have stepped on others, now others step on me. It is just, oh Lord, it is just. But oh! merciful Father," cried she, as her spirit began to give way, "let all thy

"I am to blame, and I alone should suffer."—*Page 149.*

wrath fall upon me; for I am the guilty one. Let not the jealousy of Richard bring harm unto others than me. I am to blame, and I alone should suffer." As she finished this speech she stood erect, her face turned heavenward, and her arms upraised in entreaty. As she stood thus her noble form lost none of that queenly dignity which must ever have marked her as a Queen among women.

"Come, come, mother, thou must not give way thus. Gloucester would rejoice indeed, if he knew that he had so affected thee," said Dorset, as he advanced and put his arm around his mother's neck, and patted her tenderly upon the shoulder. "Besides," he continued, gently, as he led her to the window, "we are losing valuable time. We know not when Gloucester may arrive; and when he does, it is then too late for thee to leave the Palace."

"Thou art right, my son," said her Majesty. "Indeed 'tis weakness in me to thus give way. All mine energies must now be set aworking, that I may cause that traitor's downfall." As she spoke she walked rapidly to a door leading to some of her servant's quarters. This she opened, and called within:—"What ho! Jane!" Then as some one made answer, she continued:—"Have all my belongings put into boxes at once; all my jewels carefully put together in their case. All things must be in readiness within the hour."

"It shall be done, your Majesty," came from the inner room.

The girls then hastened to their apartments, to get their belongings in readiness for their departure; whilst Dorset went to give orders to his following to be prepared to escort her Majesty.

Within the time specified by the Queen all arrangements had been completed, and they were ready to cross over to the Sanctuary.

Though the distance is short—in fact, the two buildings join—yet they were escorted by a body of armed men. Hazel told me after that they looked more like Queen Margaret going to battle, in the time of Warwick, than the good Queen Elizabeth on her way unto a Sanctuary.

The little Duke of York laughed and chatted as they were collecting his toy weapons. "Wait, Lady Hazel, until I grow up and am a man, and can hold a lance in rest. Then I will ride a tourney; and when I am proclaimed the champion of the day I shall make thee my Queen of Beauty, and thou shalt put a wreath upon my head. Oh, thou needst not laugh!" he cried, as Hazel smiled at this confident young gentleman; "remember, I shall soon be old enough to wear mine armour, and break a lance; I'm nearly nine already," he added, as he straightened his little body, and threw back his head with as bold a toss as could any old champion produce.

"And wilt thou not make me thy Queen of

Beauty?" asked Mary, as though she did feel the slight.

"Now come, Lady Mary, do not be cross with me; I'll make thee a Queen of Beauty too; for I shall ride lots of tourneys, and be the champion every time. Uncle of Gloucester is going to teach me how to hold my lance, that I can dismount a knight; so I cannot be other than a great champion, when I have such a teacher; for ye know uncle of Gloucester is the greatest lance in the world. Is he not, sister?" And he turned to the Princess Elizabeth, as though seeking support with which to prop up his idol.

"Nay, that I cannot tell," answered his eldest sister. "Thou hast a greater knowledge of these things than have I." And she smiled sadly on the young innocent.

"'Tis very true," said the little Prince, with a wise nod, as they set out after his mother, "we men know more of those things; yet 'tis the ladies that do inspire us and lead us on to such great feats."

The Princess, Mary, and Hazel, could no longer restrain their laughter. This greatly offended the little Duke. He lowered the butt of the little whip which he did carry, no matter what his occupation, and charged, with all the speed he could succeed in forcing from his little body. He struck his brother, Dorset, fairly between the shoulders, which gave that nobleman such a start that he

scarce kept his feet. Then the little Prince turned and looked back at the girls, with a satisfied smile, which plainly said:—"Now, ye would laugh at me? Was not that course run right well and knightly?"

By this time they had reached their destination; so, after dismissing their following, they were all admitted to the Sanctuary.

CHAPTER XIV

I REACH WESTMINSTER

WHEN we reached Westminster, and neared the Palace, Lord Hastings, attended by a large following, among which I espied Catesby, came forth to meet us. As we did near them they lined the road on either side and cheered the King as we passed between these rows of English oaks. Hastings himself joined in with us and rode with Buckingham, behind the King and Gloucester. When we arrived at the Palace and dismounted Hastings approached Richard and whispered something which I did not catch, though I was standing just behind the Duke.

"When did she go?" asked Richard.

I could not hear what Hastings answered.

"And took the little Duke along?" cried the Prince, in a voice that plainly showed his annoyance. "Now by Holy Paul!" he continued, "this is indeed too much. Her Majesty doth forget herself."

"What is it, uncle, that my mother does forget?" asked the young King, who had overheard this last remark. He looked Richard firmly in the eye as he spake and held his head so high and

spoke with such a dignity as had proclaimed him a King right royal, even had he been dressed in the garb of a rag monger.

"Ah, your Majesty, thy mother, I am sad to say, hath not stayed to greet her son and King; when I said she had forgot herself I meant to say that she had forgot her duty, which was to stay and welcome thee, after thy long absence from her sight. And besides not being near herself, which were in itself strange, she hath taken with her all of thy dear sisters, and his Grace of York, thy brother."

"No doubt my mother had good cause for her act, and I do not wish to hear her criticized," said Edward, with great heat. "But uncle," he asked, in a more gentle tone, when he saw the look of pain on Gloucester's face, "whither hath she gone?"

"To the Sanctuary over yonder, so my Lord of Hastings tells me."

"But why should she take Sanctuary, as though this were a time of war and bloodshed?"

"Nay, that I cannot tell your Majesty. 'Twas this strange act that made me to say—more in surprise than with premeditation—that thy Royal mother had forgot herself; for which offense I crave my master's pardon," said Richard with prodigious meekness. He stood with uncovered head before the little King and looked, so to perfection, the saint which thinks he hath trans-

gressed, and humbly prays for pardon, that not one there—besides some few who knew the man—but thought him the meekest soul in England.

"Indeed, mine uncle, I meant not to be cross with thee; when I spoke I knew not the hurt that my words did carry to thee; and besides, now that I understand the matter, I wonder not that thou didst express thy surprise. Indeed 'tis strange that my mother so should flee to Sanctuary, as though her son were to be considered as her enemy."

This, no doubt, was the object Gloucester had aimed at when he sued so meekly for his pardon. He desired to win the King over to his side, and make him to believe that 'twas from her son she fled. It was now more easy for me to read his object in his manner, since his treachery with Rivers and the others.

We then entered the Palace, where Richard called a council to decide what measures should be taken in order that the Duke of York might be brought to keep company with his brother.

"For," said Gloucester, "'tis an insult to his Majesty, to thus fly from him as though he had the plague. Indeed his Royal Highness of York must be returned at once to his proper place, beside his brother. If this news be bruited abroad," continued he, "'twill make England precious ridiculous in the eyes of all Europe."

Cardinal Bouchier and the Bishop of York were present at this council.

"And what course wouldst thou advise me to pursue, that I may succeed in releasing the little Duke from his involuntary imprisonment?" asked Richard, speaking to the Cardinal.

"Ah! your Royal Highness, it may be very difficult, indeed, to change the mind of the Queen. Thou knowest as well as I how wilful is her Majesty, when she hath once made up her mind."

"Let her not dare to match her strength against me," cried Gloucester, who now spoke more freely, as the King had left the room. "By Saint Paul! if she doth not hand the boy over unto his legal protector I shall be compelled to take him by force, which I do not like to do."

"Ah! good my lord, commit not the sin of using force on those who have taken refuge in God's place of protection, where the vilest criminal need fear no harm!" cried both the Churchmen, with one voice.

"Yes," returned Richard, with his cunning smile, "but, most reverend sirs, the Duke of York hath committed no offence, and therefore he has not the rights of Sanctuary; and, on that account, the Queen must expect force, if she consents not to return him when politely requested, by two such worshipful gentlemen, to do so."

If the Churchmen were looking for some excuse to enable them to agree with Richard they

now had found one. "Ah! your Royal Highness, who but thyself could have thought of such a reason?"

"Who indeed?" thought I, but with a different meaning.

"The point is well taken," consented the Bishop of York. "The Prince, thy nephew, having committed no sin, has—under the customs of Holy Church—no right nor reason for taking Sanctuary; and besides," he continued, "I understand that he hath no desire to remain in seclusion, and is but detained there by her Majesty, his mother."

"This she hath no right to do," broke in Richard. "Was not I appointed the protector of, these children, by my Royal brother? And does the Queen take it upon herself thus to assume mine office?" With this Gloucester arose and walked back and forth across the room; his left arm drawn up, and his thumb stuck in his belt, as was his usual custom. With his right hand he played with his dagger; drawing it partly from its richly jewelled sheath, and then returning it with a sharp "snick," thus keeping time with his limping step. As he walked he kept up a continual string of sharp speeches against the Queen, like the discharge from a company of archers, each arrow having its mark to strike. "Ha! Saint Paul, one might think the Protector of England an office of but little weight. Old

Louis will have grand amusement at our expense. The King's brother not at the coronation, but hidden away, as though his Majesty were a tyrant. 'Tis monstrous! And the sacrilege of this act. A boy, not yet nine years of age, which could never have committed an offence, hidden in a house of God as though it were a fortress. Ha! my Lord Cardinal," said he, as he stopped suddenly before that most reverend gentleman, "the slight is as great to thee as it is to me. What sayst thou? Shall we submit meekly, whilst others walk over us and break the laws of our several charges; or shall we demand the person of the Duke, and, if he be not handed over gently, then rescue him by force?"

"Most certainly I do agree with his Royal Highness, and think 'tis an outrage for the Queen to take the stand she hath," said the Bishop, who evidently desired to curry favor with Gloucester by agreeing with him. "Of course," he added, methought a little nervously, "if her Majesty consents to quietly restore the little Duke, so much the better; then no precedent need be set for using force to obtain those which have taken refuge in a Sanctuary."

"And what says my Lord Hastings?" asked Richard, as he turned to that nobleman, who had not yet expressed his opinion.

"I am of the same opinion as these most holy gentlemen. If her Majesty can be persuaded to

hand over the Duke, peacefully, so much the better; if not, why then use force," replied the Chancellor.

During all this conversation Catesby—who was present—stood beside Hastings, as a dog by its master. Whenever he caught mine eye he stared so impudently that I had much ado to restrain myself from walking across the room and letting the low-lived hound feel the weight of my hand. All that which Harleston had told me of his insults to Hazel was brought to my mind with double its former force, and almost drove me mad.

"Oh, I will twist thy neck for thee at the first opportunity," said I, not knowing that I said it half aloud, till Harleston, who was standing at my side, poked me in the ribs with his elbow.

"Hush!" said he, "or thou shalt be overheard."

This recalled me to myself, and I took good care thereafter not to think aloud when in the presence of men that I regarded as mine enemies.

The moment that Catesby saw Harleston check me he leaned over the Chancellor's shoulder and whispered something in his ear. I know not what it was; but it must have referred to us, for Hastings turned at once and eyed me suspiciously. His gaze was anything but pleasant; for he clearly showed his displeasure at something, by his long and frowning look.

"Another debt I owe thee, Master Catesby," said I, taking good care, however, that I did not pronounce the words by other agents than my mind.

So it was there decided that the two Churchmen should go together, and try to persuade the Queen to hand over the Duke of York to them. In case this failed they were to inform her that Gloucester would have him taken from her by force.

CHAPTER XV

MICHAEL AND CATESBY

THOUGH Harleston and I were both anxious to go at once unto the Sanctuary, and see the girls, yet my friend, who thought it might arouse suspicion were we to be seen there by the Cardinal and the Bishop, persuaded me to wait until the following day. "For," said he, "I do believe that fellow Catesby already suspects us of being in some way connected with the Queen's flight. Methinks 'twas in reference to that he whispered to Hastings, and which caused Lord William to look on us so unpleasantly."

"I believe that thou art right," I replied.

We were sitting in my room when this conversation took place. Just then a knock came at the door. I feared that we might have been overheard, so I thought the best plan should be to open, without any show of mystery. I therefore called out, without changing my position:—"Come in!" I scarcely know what I expected to see when the door should open; yet methinks I had not been surprised had it been either Lord Hastings himself, or a body of yeomen sent to arrest me. Remember, my dears, after the ex-

ample I had seen as we were entering Stony Stratford my mind was in a fit state to expect something of this kind. It was with a sigh of relief, therefore, that I did recognize mine Irish messenger, which had so well fulfilled his mission. The enormous fellow completely filled the door, as he stood upon the threshold, cap in hand, awaiting a further command ere he did enter.

"Ah! Michael, it is thou."

"Divil anither," he replied, without moving a muscle.

I smiled at his serious humour, and asked him to enter and close the door; for I knew from his manner that he had something to communicate. "And now, Michael, I must thank thee for the speedy way in which thou didst fulfil thy mission."

"Uh! yer honour, it's no thanks Oi desarve fer doin' moy dooty," and he shifted from one foot to the other and struck his boot with his cap, as though my thanks but made him to feel uneasy. With all his giant strength he was at heart but a great boy.

"But what is now thy business with me? If there be aught that I can do for thee thou hast but to ask and it is done, Michael."

"No, yer honour, it is not that," he replied. "Oi came but to till thee, sor, that thoine armour —which was rusted some—hath bin clained and is now ridy fer wear," said he, quickly, as he eyed Harleston closely.

"What in the devil's name art thou talking about? Why, I have no armour that is rusted."

"No, not now, sor," said he, with that same serene face. When he had finished this, however, and saw Harleston's head thrown back, as my friend stared at the ceiling, in an effort to refrain from laughing, Michael raised his eyebrows, and jerked his head in Frederick's direction.

"Ah! so that is the difficulty," said I, laughing. "'Tis my friend thou fearest. Ah, Michael, I am proud of thy discretion," I continued, as I walked over to where he stood, and slapped him on that shoulder which stood out like a block of iron draped with cloth. And indeed one might as well have struck a piece of steel as that shoulder with its shirt of mail beneath the rough coarse jacket. "However, thou needst not fear to speak out boldly before Sir Frederick, as I have no secret that is unknown to him."

"In that case, sor, Oi must pray thoy pardon," said he, speaking to Harleston; "but in these toimes, whin great min, as will as the common folk, turn out to be divils it be moighty hard to pick out the honest soul."

"Indeed thou art right, Michael, and it shall be well for thee to continue to trust but those that thou knowest full well to be true and honest men," said my friend, which admired this frank admission of suspicion. "Thou art an honest

fellow, and I like thee well; but be careful of this," he continued,—"be sure that thou dost practise thine honesty with great caution. Honesty, now-a-days, seems to be the shortest road to the block; unless thou art cautious enough to be honestly dishonest."

"Oi understand not thoy wourds," said Michael, as he scratched his head, with a puzzled look; but for a moment only. "Uh!" said he, "Oi think that Oi have a hould on what yer honour manes, and Oi'll profit by yer advice, sor."

"But come," said I, "What is it that thou wishest to tell me? For well do I know that story about mine armour to be but a disguise."

"In faith it was, sor, and Oi now craves yer pardon fer the tillin' of a loie to yer honour."

"It had been granted ere thou didst ask. Come, to thy news."

"Will, sor, it was jist after Oi had delivered thoy missage, and was walkin' along the hall on moy way to look after moy horse, which was sore toired, that Oi mit his honour, Sor William Catesby. As Oi took off moy cap to him, he stops me, and sez he:—'Whare didst thou come from?'

"'From Oireland, yer honour,' sez Oi. This Oi said that Oi moight have toime to git a good loie through moy thick skull.

"'Thou needst not have tould me that,' sez he,

and he began to laugh, though fer the loife o' me Oi know not yit what so playzed him."

I glanced at Harleston. His head was thrown back in his chair, as was his habit whilst sitting and listening to anything that interested him. I could see by his amused smile that he was not surprised at Catesby's laughter. No more was I.

"What said you then?" asked I, as I saw Michael looking at me in surprise. No doubt he was wondering what I saw to so amuse me.

"Uh! thin Oi said:—'But yer honour axed me, so Oi had to till thee.'

"'Oi mint not whare wast thou born, but whare hast thou come from jist now?' sez he.

"'Uh! yer honour manes whare am Oi jist after lavin', this minit?' sez Oi.

"Thin he nodded, and still kipt on a smoilin'.

"'Bad luck to me fer a stoopid clown,' sez Oi. 'Oi moight have known what yer honour mint, without kapin' ye standin, explainin' the houle o' this toime.'

"Now all this whoile, sor, Oi was warein' out what little brains the good Lord gave me (and Oi think he moight have bin moure liberal or ilse kape me out o' the way o' sich confusin' quistions) to troy and foind a somethin' raisonable excuse fer bein' thare. At last Oi saw that Oi had gained all the toime that moight be, without

makin' him angry, so Oi said the first thing that came to moy tongue.

"'Uh! sor.' sez Oi, 'some wan's stray dawg came in at the oupen door, so Oi came after to troy and put the baste out.'

"'Thou lookest strangely besmeared with mud. Didst thou git that with chasin' of the dawg?' sez he, and he oyed me loike the divil.

"'Uh! sure, yer honour, Oi was jist a gittin off o' moy horse whin Oi saw the baste inter,' sez Oi.

"'And whare moight you have bin on thoy horse?' sez he.

"'Whoy, upon his back, sor,' sez Oi.

"'Nay, nay,' sez he, 'Oi mane from whare didst thou roide to-day, fer from thoy looks thou hast bin beyond the city gates?'

"'Yis, yer honour,' sez Oi, 'thou hast found me out; but Oi pray thee do not report me to moy master, whin he returns.'

"'And who is thoy master?' sez he.

"'Sor Walter Bradley. and it playze yer honour,' sez Oi.

"Now methought, sor, that this would put him off the scint; fer by the close way he quistioned me Oi filt sure he must be on it. But whin Oi mintioned thoy name, sor, he wint into a divil of a timper, indade he did, yer honour. And thin he turned on me and called me sich avil names as made it hard fer me to hould back moy

hand from brakin' the head o' the spalpeen; fer indade, sor, he is no gintlemin, with all his foine airs, and knoight though he be."

"And what said he of me?" I asked. "Surely he had a bad word for me."

"Uh! yer honour, Oi would not repate his insults fer the wourld. Indade its ashamed O'moysilf Oi am fer not crackin' his skull with moy fist, fer what he said o' thee. The raison Oi did not, was because Oi feared to do it without thoine order. Do but say the wourd and he is a corpse, sor."

"No, do the knave no harm, Michael; for it should but cause thy death. Indeed thou art right, he is a disgrace to knighthood; still, he is a friend of my Lord Hastings, whose vengeance would fall on thee."

"Sure methinks his lordship should thank me fer riddin' him o' sich a noosance," said Michael, with a shrug of his shoulders which clearly showed his contempt for Catesby.

"But did he question thee any further?" I asked.

"Did he quistion me anny further, yer honour? Hivins, sor! Oi should think he did that same," said Michael with a force that left no room for doubt in my mind.

"'Uh!' sez he, whin he had stopped his foul talk about thee, sor; "Oi belave thou hast jist ridden from Northampton, thou villain,' sez he;

as though he had anny roight to call an honest man a villain, But thin, mayhap he gits other folks mixed up with hissilf, whin he gits excoited loike," added Michael with prodigious solemness.

I was compelled to laugh, despite the anxiety I felt about this matter.

"'Northampton?' sez Oi, in surprise loike, as though Oi had nivir heard o' sich a place.

"'Didst thou not roide from Ludlow to Northampton with the King?" sez he.

"'From whare, sor?' sez Oi.

"'From Ludlow, thou stoopid varlet,' sez he; and he raised his hand as though he filt loike hittin' me a blow on the ear.

"'Uh! yer honour,' sez Oi, 'it's makin' sport o' poor common soudlier thou art doin'. Hivin knows, sor, whare that place ye spake o' may be; but fer moy part, yer honour, Oi nivir heard o' it afore.'

"'Oi know not what to make o' thee,' sez he, after he had stood a starin' at me whoilst a man moight brathe about the quarter o' a score o' toimes.

"'Mither-o'-Gawd!' sez Oi, a prayin' loike, 'dount lit him make me into anny thing loike hissilf.'"

This was too much for Harleston. He lay doubled up in his chair like a wizzled leaf in the

fall of the year, and shaking as though the leaf he resembled was an aspen. He made no sound, but I could see it was all that he could do to refrain from bursting forth into one roar.

"Go on, Michael," said I, when I had somewhat recovered myself; for I too was bursting with pent up laughter, "What did he then say?"

"Uh! sure sor, he saw that Oi was but a poor fool, and that he could not git anny news out o' me, so he shrugged his shoulders loike a damned Frinchmin and walked on. But still he kipt alookin' back as though he didn't know whither to belave me or not."

"Ah, Michael, thou art indeed a true soldier and a faithful servant. From this time forth I do desire thee to attend me as my squire. In field of battle, or in the lists, do thou attend me; for well do I know that a truer heart or a stronger arm in England there is not."

"Thou art right Bradley," said Harleston, with a hearty warmth, "and hadst thou not made this man the offer that thou hast just made I would have asked him to serve me."

Poor Michael stood speechless before us. First would he look at me, and then to my friend. He could not speak his thanks in words; but he did it with such an eloquence by his looks as had been more than sufficient, even had I done him the greatest favour in my power. But I believe

to this day that I could not have better pleased him had I been the King and made him my Lord High Chancellor.

"But, sor," said Michael, when he had somewhat recovered himşelf, and knelt and, despite mine efforts to prevent him, kissed my hand, "Oi 'am not wourthy o' sich an honour. Sure, sor, Oi can lay on a hard blow and sich loike, but as fer attindin' on a gintlemin, in a proper way loike, uh! bad luck to me, Oi'd be but a disgrace to thee, sor."

"Come, come, Michael, thou must not be too modest," said I.

"Remember this advice that now I give thee," said Harleston. "If thou wouldst rise in this world that is filled with the gusts of opportunities do not let modesty nor fear close up thy wings of advantage. But spread them rather, that they may catch these eddying gusts, and thou be borne upon them to the heights of greatness."

Michael stood and stared at Harleston, with his mouth open, for a breathing space. Then said he in surprise:—"But, yer honour, divil a wing have Oi to moy name, and Oi dount want thim jist yit, seein' that one must go through purgatory ere he begins to grow thim."

Evidently Harleston's speech was beyond the depth of Michael's understanding.

"Uh! sor," said he, when he had expressed his opinion of the wings of advantage, "Oi was

about to finish about Sor William whin yer honours spoke to me so koindly.

"What, was there more?"

"Thare was, sor. Oi walked down the hall till Oi came to a corner, and, as he had koind o' made me inquisitive loike, by his quistioning o' me so close, Oi jist stipped around the corner and stopped to look back to see whare he wint, sor."

"Yes, and where did he go?" I asked with interest.

"Sure, sor, he wint straight up to the door whare the ladies came out o', and he stops thare, sor, and he looks back to see if thare was anny one behoind him loike. Will, sor, Oi was out o' soight by the toime his eyes had rached the place whare Oi was hidin'. Whin Oi looks out agin he was not thare; but the ladies' door was open."

"Death and damnation!" I almost shrieked. Then turning to Michael:—"Go on, go on!" I cried.

"He was ounly in fer the space o' whoilst ye moight brathe about a half a score o' toimes, thin out he comes, with a koind o' disappintment on his face.

"'Must be in the park,' sez he, as he started fer the door. 'Damned if she'll escape me this toime.'

"Oi gits out as fast as moy long legs could carry

me. But Oi waited outsoide and saw him go into the park, astrollin' along at his aise loike.

"As soon as he had got out o' soight Oi takes after him, afollowin' the same path that he took. He wint all over the houle damned place, alookin' here and alookin' thare, as though he ixpicted to foind some wan. Mither-o'-Gawd! sor, had the ladies bin thare he'd o' found some wan behoind him afore anny harm could o' come to thim fair craters; fer, yer honour, avin though he be a knoight, Oi'd not trust him as far as Oi could throw him with a browken arm."

"Thou art right there," said Harleston; "he hath fallen to the lowest depths, and needs must soon be called upon to answer for his conduct."

"Fallen! Harleston; dost thou say fallen?" I cried; "Why, the dog hath never been aught but what he is. 'Tis but the influence that he hath obtained with Lord Hastings that is now lending him more audacity."

"Will, sor," continued Michael, when again I told him to proceed with his story, "he discouvered not the ladies in the park. Thin, yer honour, he starts back, and it did give me the divil o' a toime to kape out o' soight o' the varmint. Jist as he come in soight o' the court yard he yills out as though some wan had struck him with a dagger—bad luck that some wan didn't—'What the divil manes this?' sez he, so loud that Oi

could hear him, and he starts off at a run, as though the houle Palace was afoire.

"'Uh! murther!' sez Oi, and Oi takes after him.

"Whin Oi came close enough, Oi saw the Quane, Gawd bliss her, and all o' the Princesses, and the little Dooke o' York and his Hoighness, the Marquis o' Dorset, and the Lady Hazel and the Lady Mary, and thare was a strong body o' souldiers walkin' all around thim and protictin' thim loike.

"Sor William stood alookin' after thim as they wint across the yard, and all the whoile he was standin' he was acursin' and aswearin' as will as a bitter man moight.

"Oi lift him astandin' thare whoilst Oi wint and took care o' moy horse.

"Whin Oi came back near the place whare he had bin, Hivin hilp me if he wasn't still astandin' thare, with his head down, alookin' at his fate!

"'Uh!' sez he, as Oi came within ear-shot o' his tongue, 'the Dook will give me the divil fer this. It must have bin that knave o' an Oirishman that brought her the news o' her brother's and son's fate. It would not be so bad if they hadn't taken little York,' sez he, still atalkin' to hissilf, though he ought to be ashamed o' hissilf fer spakin' to sich a knave.

"Thin Oi thought it was toime fer me to git

out o' soight, as he moight not loike to be caught atalkin' to hissilf loike—and Oi dount blame him a bit nather. So Oi jist gits behoind the gate that goes down that soide alley, and Oi waits fer anny thing more that's comin'.

"'Bradley shall pay for this,' sez he; 'he must be the wan which hath warned the Quane,' sez he. 'Oi had bitter go and till Hastin's,' sez he, after he had agin stood soilent fer some toime. 'Oi wounder what Lord William will think o' Richard's plan.'

"'If its wan that thou dost agray with,' sez Oi to moysilf, the same as Sor William sez to hissilf, 'and he be an honest man, he'll have a damned poor opinion o' it,' sez Oi.

"Thin Sor William goes on agin, amumblin' to hissilf, so that Oi could hardly hear him. 'If he knows what is good fer him he'll agray with Dook Richard, and lind him his support. Still,' sez he, after stoppin' agin, 'if Hastin's was removed loike Oi moight some day be the Chancellor moysilf,' sez he, and he straightens hissilf up and rached up into the air as though he was a-tryin' to catch a floy, though agoin' so slow that anny smort baste, loike a floy, could git away afore he got within soight o' it. Thin, whin he thought he had whativir he was after, he straightins his arm out to the houle o' its lingth, and houlds it thare, with his head athrown back,

as though he was his Houliness the Pope at Rome.

"'Ah! wilth, power, and ivirythin',' sez he, and he smoiled loike the divil.

"'Ah! Bradley, thoy toime is drawin' short. Whin Oi till Richard the part that thou hast takin aginst him methinks Oi see thoy head upon the block, whare Rivers', Grey's and Vaughan's soon shall be.'

"Lord, sor, Oi did have the divil's own toime to kape from killin' the murtherin' spalpeen!

"Whin he had finished his big talk he started off, and had his sarvant git his horse ridy, and he sits out fer somewhare as though the divil hissilf was at his hales—and its moysilf that am thinkin' he's in the varmint's heart.

"Oi thin waited with fear and trimblin' fer yer honour to return, and as soon as Oi saw thee come to thoy rooms Oi followed thee at once, sor, that Oi moight warn thee not to trust that knave, who is full, intoirely, of all that belongs to Hill, as is plainly seen by his mane lookin' face."

When Michael had finished his somewhat lengthy, yet to me the interestingest story that I might hear, both Harleston and I sat for some time without speaking. At length I addressed Michael. "Thou hast done better than I could have wished for, and indeed thine information is of the greatest use to me. I cannot thank thee,

nor repay thee, sufficiently for this service; but if I fall not into the snares of this scheming villain thou shalt lack for naught that is in my power to give thee."

"Uh! sor, thou hast given thanks that Oi do not desarve; for Oi have but done my dooty to moy master. But Oi till thee this, sor,—In case annything should go amiss with thee, through that spalpeen, Oi hare take moine oath that Oi'll have the loife o' that varmint fer it."

CHAPTER XVI

MY DANGEROUS POSITION

"WELL, Harleston," said I, after Michael had left us, "here is the position in which I now find myself placed. Methinks thou wilt agree with me when I say that my prospects are anything but of the brightness of the sun.

"The Queen hath fled from her home and hath taken refuge in a Sanctuary for reason of her fear of Gloucester. The young King, her son, is in the power of the man from whom she hath fled. Catesby, who is evidently in the service of Richard, hath good reason for his belief that I warned the Queen and thus have been the cause of her taking refuge. Richard hath some scheme in hand, the object of which we know not. The death of Rivers, Grey and Vaughan, is evidently decided upon merely because they are friends to the Queen. Gloucester is bent on gaining possession of the King's little brother, for what purpose we know not. What chance then have I of escaping the tusks of the boar?" asked I, when I had finished this somewhat gloomy list of facts.

"My dear friend," replied Harleston, "how-

ever strange it may sound, I must say methinks thou hast naught to fear from Catesby's telling to Richard the part thou hast played in connection with the Queen's flight."

"Why?" I asked in surprise.

"For this reason," replied my friend, "Catesby was evidently instructed to prevent any messages from reaching the Queen, else why should he so question Michael, and, when speaking to himself, say that Richard would give him the devil when he should learn of the Queen's flight?"

"Well?" I asked, "and what hath that to do with removing the danger from me?"

"This," replied my friend in his quiet yet most impressive manner. "Thinkest thou that Catesby would dare to tell Gloucester that he did permit a common soldier to carry a message unto the Queen, when he should have prevented it? No," said he answering his own question, "it is more likely that he would attribute the warning to Dorset, over whom he could have no control, and therefore could not be blamed for allowing him to warn the Queen."

"That may be so," I cried. "And if it be, why then I still may wear my head; for if Catesby doth tell Richard I feel a tickling in the back of my neck which tells me it then must needs be severed."

"However," said Harleston, "thou art not by any means out of danger. Remember this," he

continued; "some one must have warned Dorset. Catesby may suggest that thou wert the man which sent the news to him."

"Then the danger is as great as ever!" I cried in disappointment. "Come, come, Harleston, thou art becoming as bad as Michael, with thy surprises and disappointments. Why didst thou raise my hopes only to dash them again to earth and crush them like an egg?" This I said with a forced smile; for I tried to accept the inevitable with a philosophy that I was far from feeling.

"No," said my friend, with a grave face, "I think thy danger is not great; for though Catesby may cause Richard to suspect thee of being the cause of the Queen's flight, he cannot prove it without showing neglect of duty on his part."

"Thou art right, my friend," said I, as I grasped his hand and shook it warmly. "Truly, I know not what I could do without thine advice.

"But tell me this," I said, as I remembered the incident in the Council room. "What did Catesby whisper to Lord Hastings that made the Chancellor frown on us?"

"Nay, nay, my friend," said Frederick, laughing, "thou must not think that I can read the thoughts of people." Then he added more seriously:—"'Tis like he did but tell Lord William that he suspected thee of being connected with Dorset in the warning of the Queen."

"Yes, that must have been it. How clear thou dost make everything, Harleston. I would that I could look on life as calmly, and think more ere I act. Now who but a prophet could have foreseen any danger in informing the Queen of her friends' arrest: yet," I added, "I thank God for having permitted me to succeed in doing it, even though I lose my head for having done it."

"Thou must not give me credit for having foreseen any danger in sending a message by the hand of a servant; for Heaven knows I had no idea that their plan was so complete as to take precautions to prevent the Queen from being warned."

"Still, thou didst think it might be dangerous for me to come myself to Westminster; therefore, something must have told thee that they did not wish the Queen to know of her brother's and her son's arrest."

"Yes," he replied, "but thou dost give me credit that belongs not to me. The only danger I foresaw was the affront it might give Gloucester. I did not for one moment think that they would dare to intercept a message to the Queen."

"Well, Frederick," said I, "thou seest now that they dare do anything. When Richard even threatens to take the little Duke from his Mother, by force, and that when they are in the Sanctuary, which has ever been considered too holy for force to be used upon it, we need not be

surprised at any move his Highness makes. Harleston, thy prophecy is being fulfilled."

"When did I make a prophecy?" asked my friend.

"Dost thou not remember when first we met, and thou didst say that Richard, if he were ever made Protector, would be revenged upon those who did oppose him?"

"Ah, yes, I do remember me; but since that night my mind and body have been so occupied that I have not noticed my prediction reaching its fulfilment. However," he continued, "but part of it, and that the minor one, is now being played. If this part lasts not too long we shall live to see the last and bloodiest of the prophecy. Do but look back over the history of our race and thou shalt see, wherever a man of Richard's character —if ever such there has been—came into a position of power he shone out with the brilliancy of a star. But the star they all resembled was a falling one, and left a trail of blood behind it, as it tumbled from its height."

CHAPTER XVII

AT THE SANCTUARY

THAT night my sleep was troubled with strange and fantastic dreams. I know not how many different forms these delusions took; but through all these tormenting and hideous scenes, in which I seemed to be playing a troubled part, there was one person present which ever prevented the final calamity from falling upon my head. No sooner was I saved from certain destruction in one form than the dream was changed, gradually, and, after passing through a cloudy stage, again was I struggling against some fearful monster. Then would this friend, the face of whom I could not see, stretch forth a mighty arm and brush the awful creature from my chest, where he was perched, crushing out my life.

At last even the cords of sleep, with which I had been so securely bound, could bear the strain no longer; so I awoke to find myself completely worn out, from my struggles with these phantom foes.

It was still too early for the inmates of the Palace to be stirring.

"'Tis well that I awoke when I did," thought

I; " for a double reason. First, had I slept much longer I had surely been strangled by those accursed monsters; and second, I now may leave the Palace, and proceed to the Sanctuary, without fear of arousing suspicion, and therefore, of being followed." For truly, my dears, I began to fear that I might soon find myself in the Tower, were I to be seen having any relations with the Queen; and I felt sure that Catesby would give his right hand to see my headless corpse.

I hastily dressed myself and repaired unto my friend's quarters. I had some difficulty in arousing him without disturbing those in the adjoining apartments; for Harleston admitted that naught but the sound of the last trump could ever awaken him until he had finished basking in the sunny smiles of the Goddess of Sleep. As this speech of his came to my mind I could not help but shudder as I thought of the treatment that faithfully-worshipped Goddess had bestowed upon me. Instead of smiling, how cruelly had she frowned.

At length I succeeded in drawing forth a lazy enquiry as to who I was and what was my business.

" Come, Harleston, bestir thyself, for the love of Heaven. Sleeping at this time of the day? 'Tis absurd," called I, gently, through the keyhole.

" Ah! Walter, it is thou," said Harleston, as he opened the door. " Heigh-ho! why, art thou completely dressed already? What hour is it?"

he asked, as he made a frantic effort to dislocate his shoulders, neck and jaw, all at one and the same time.

"'Tis almost sun up, and we must be stirring and proceed unto the Sanctuary before the others do arise, that we may not be observed."

"Ah! a good idea, Bradley. One moment and I will be with thee," he said, as he began hastily to dress. He was soon ready, so we crossed over.

The Queen, her family, and the girls, were at matins when we asked to be permitted to enter; so we were compelled to walk up and down before the door, and bide our time as best we could until her Majesty had finished her devotions; for at that time it was even more difficult to obtain admittance to the Sanctuary than it had been at any other, on account of her Majesty being within its sacred walls.

At the end of what seemed to us an age, but what in reality must have been but a very short space, for anxious love makes the moments into hours, the slide in the door was pushed back and a not unpleasant voice asked what names we might wish to send unto the Queen.

"Sir Frederick Harleston and Sir Walter Bradley, but late returned from Ludlow with the King, pray to be admitted to the presence of the Queen, as we have information that is of importance to her Majesty," said I.

Again the sliding panel was closed, and again

were we compelled to struggle with our impatient spirits. But this time it was not for long. Presently the slide was opened to the width of a lady's hand. To this opening was applied an eye, beautifully draped with long and curling, dark brown lashes, through which that orb—the true transmitter of the workings of the soul—sparkled with expectancy and love, like a precious jewel held in a gentle shadow. And indeed what jewel could equal it in preciousness? For it belonged to Hazel. Then the door flew open, and we were locked in each other's arms in a shorter space of time than one might draw a breath in.

Seldom, if ever, had that holy house been the scene of such a meeting. Verily, it is a wonder that we were not struck dead for daring to thus demonstrate our love in that cold, consecrated edifice, where one is scarce expected to draw a breath, except for the purpose of praying. But mayhap this house had become used to unholy men, during the wars of the white rose with the red. Be this as it may, nothing of harm befell us for our conduct.

"Oh! my dear, fair flower," I cried, as my lips touched her on the forehead; "great is my joy at seeing thee, as is my sorrow that thou shouldst be compelled to thus seek safety from those accursed scoundrels which now surround our King."

"Walter, dear, I think not of that, now that thou art again returned to me. But come," she said suddenly, as she remembered my mission, "the Queen awaits thee anxiously; so let us go to her at once. Afterwards we may talk, as I have much to tell thee."

"Hast thou no word for Sir Frederick?" I asked, as we started down the corridor.

"Ah! Sir Frederick, thou must forgive me;" said Hazel, in confusion, "but I was so surprised and—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Harleston, with a smile, "I quite understand. Indeed, Lady Hazel, thine oversight carries not with it the sting of slight; for, under the circumstances, I had been a churl indeed to have been offended by such a pretty show of love's one-heartedness."

This brought a succession of crimson waves to Hazel's lovely face, adding to its beauty as does the evening sunlight to the rose.

"But how knowest thou so much of these things that thou dost speak of?" she asked, as she looked up at Harleston's face with her head held to the one side and a smile of triumph playing about her mouth. "Surely one could not discourse so learnedly on any subject without having had practical experience."

Harleston was fairly taken aback; but as he attempted to stammer out something in reply we came to her Majesty's room; so Sir Frederick

was permitted to escape Hazel's criticism of his explanation.

We were admitted to the Queen's presence by her son, the Marquis of Dorset, who met us at the door.

"Ah! my friends," said he, pleasantly, "I am indeed pleasured that ye have come. Her Majesty and I have been awaiting your arrival with great anxiety; for we would hear from your lips the recital of that unhappy and treacherous event which took place at Stony Stratford."

"Yes," said the Queen, "well would I like to hear a fuller description of that which happened to our dear relatives and friends, than was given in your letter to me, or rather to Hazel," she corrected.

Harleston here left me to be spokesman, whilst he, by some admirable manœuvring, made his way unto the other end of the room, where was sitting Mary, apparently most busily engaged in stitching upon a piece of tapestry. Whilst faithfully I told the story of Gloucester's treachery, which I have already put down, and therefore need not repeat, my friend approached Mary, who appeared not to see him until he stood before her. I say she appeared to not see him; and yet this is not exactly correct. I should say she tried to appear to have not seen him. But what then caused that hand of lily whiteness so gently to tremble, like an aspen leaf? And that bosom of

Venus' mould to rise and fall so quickly, if it were not that the heart beneath had buried in its core the fire-pointed arrow shot by that lovely tyrant, Cupid, with such unerring accuracy as had put Robin Hood to shame?

When at length she did look up it was with the pleasant smile with which she would greet a friend from whom she had parted but an hour before. Evidently Mary was becoming more timid, and using the greater care to conceal her feeling the more hopelessly she felt herself entangled in love's silken meshes. As is ever the case with those of proud spirit, when they are fairly trapped, they play the indifferent, to conceal their real feelings from the eyes of their captors, or the curious. However, ere I had finished the telling of the tale to the Queen, Mary had changed her manner as she would a garment, and stood before Harleston, looking up in to his face, as though drinking in his every word. I know not what was the tale he was unfolding; but of one thing I am certain, and that is, it was not the same as I was telling to the Queen. This could I see by the expression upon Mary's face, which reflected nothing if not pleasure.

When I had finished with my story, the Queen, in her gentle look, thanked me for the service. "But oh! Sir Walter, I have yet greater trouble than the fate of those at Pomfret," said her Ma-

jesty, after sitting with folded hands and gazing with fixed eyes into vacancy.

"Yes, madam, and what may be worse than the evil fate of those we love?" I asked, though I knew full well what would be her answer.

"Yestere'en," she said, "Cardinal Bouchier, accompanied by the Bishop of York, came here to see me. When admitted the Cardinal fawned, as is his custom, and with oily tongue informed me that my late husband's hump-backed brother desired my little Prince, the Duke of York, to be permitted to attend his brother's coronation.

"'Go back to him that sent thee and say that the Queen, the little Prince's mother, hath the Duke of York in her own keeping, where he prefers to be, instead of with his uncle.'

"'But, madam,' said the Bishop, 'the little King desires to have his brother with him, that he may not be lonely.'

"'He should be permitted to come and tell his mother so, instead of resting as a prisoner, the which mayhap he is," I replied.

"'Nay, madam, truly,' said the Bishop, "it is the King's own will that doth not permit him to come and see your Majesty.'

"'And why, sir, may I ask?' Then, without waiting for his answer, I continued:—'Ah yes, I understand. His Highness, the Protector, hath

poisoned the boy's mind against his mother. A fit act for his Royal Highness.'

"'No, madam, I am sure that thou dost wrong the Duke, who is filled with all respect and love for your Majesty,' put in the Cardinal.

"'Ay, my Lord Cardinal,' I replied, 'well hath he shown his love for me and mine. Look at the prisoners at Pomfret, which never did offence to Gloucester, except that the love they bore my late lamented husband and his family hath stirred up anger in his savage bosom.'

"'Nay, indeed, your Majesty, thou dost abuse and misjudge the Duke of Gloucester,' said the Cardinal. 'As I understand the matter, it is this,' he continued; 'Lord Rivers, Sir Richard Grey and Sir Thomas Vaughan, were suspected of some plot against the King's freedom, and Duke Richard, when he learned of it, caused these three gentlemen to be detained until after the King is crowned, when it shall be for his Majesty to decide whether they shall be set at liberty or no.'

"'A pretty tale indeed is this about a plot to gain control of the King's person,' I replied with scorn. 'My Lord Cardinal, no one knows better than dost thou that my brother would be the last to so conspire against my son. 'Tis but a lie, devised by that accursed Richard!' I cried, as mine indignation began to gain ascendency over my better reason, 'to shield his own black treason.

Well do I believe, my Lord Cardinal, that this limping villain desires but to gain control of both my sons, that he may work his will upon them; and God, or rather the devil, and himself do know what that may be. And be assured of this, Master Cardinal!' I almost shrieked, to such a state of fury had this rehearsal of my wrongs aroused me, 'I shall not permit my tender son, the Duke of York, to fall into the hands of that traitorous cur, so long as this Sanctuary stands to protect the gentle babe. Gloucester hath already, through treachery, obtained control of one of my pretty children; but so long as his mother can protect the other be thou assured, good Cardinal, that hump-backed Gloucester shall not control him.'"

The Queen, as she said these words, in her excitement arose from her chair and, standing like a statue before me, her head thrown a little aback, her nostrils slightly distended, like those of a horse that hath just scented fresh-spilled blood, and her whole pose bespeaking resolution and defiance, looked like some angry Goddess about to hurl destruction upon those which had been the cause of her anger. Verily, my children, this was indeed a Queen.

My soul was so filled with admiration for this noble and unfortunate woman that I needs must kneel at her feet and kiss the hem of her gown.

"Arise, Sir Walter," said her Majesty,

tenderly; "I do not deserve such homage. This trouble is but God's punishment for so neglecting his commands, when I was in a position of power. Ah, my friend, sorrow doth tame the haughty spirit and maketh us to realize that we must live for other purposes than the fulfilment of our ambitious dreams.

"Thou mayest think it strange in me to thus take thee into my confidence and tell thee of my troubles. But this, I tell thee, Sir Walter, is the reason. Thy father was ever a faithful servant and friend of my dear husband's house; and had King Edward lived thou hadst been raised to considerable power. Thou hast proven thy loyalty to me, even in my trouble, when those which have received, at my hand, the greatest honours have deserted, what seems to them, a sinking ship. Besides all this, my soul must needs pour out its grief on some sympathetic ear. Therefore I tell thee this story of the troubles of a Queen which, whilst her husband lived, had scarce to express a wish, and the policy of an empire changed as does the wind. To-day she seeks safety for herself and family within the precincts of a Sanctuary, than which place, where is safer? And even it is not."

"Come, madam, thou must not yet despair," said Dorset, tenderly, as he saw tears rushing unto his mother's eyes. "Surely Gloucester dare not do harm to the little Duke."

"Ah, my son," replied the Queen, "well do I know that thou dost speak thus to lighten my heart with hopes of safety for my little Prince.

"But Sir Walter has not yet heard all of my conversation with the Churchmen. When I had finished my declaration that Gloucester should not have my son, so long as Westminster would protect me," continued the Queen, as she again took her seat, "the Cardinal, with a look of great sorrow, which methinks was feigned—for well do I believe him to be of Gloucester's party—again spoke:—'Then, your Majesty,' said he, 'it is only left for me to deliver the rest of the Protector's message. Believe me, madam, I would rather have my tongue torn from my throat than be the bearer of such a message unto your Majesty.'

"'Come, cease thy snivelling, and deliver thy message,' said I. 'Thou art but a lackey messenger, and therefore thou art not responsible for aught that thy master doth say, of insult though it be.' This offence to him mayhap was not good policy, but methinks it had made but little difference even had I spoken in more gentle tone," said the Queen, addressing herself to me.

"'Well then, madam,' said the Cardinal, with a great show of offended dignity; though how he came by it I know not, 'hear the complement of the Lord Protector's message. In case thou dost still persevere in thine obstinate refusal to deliver

the young Duke into the hands of his duly appointed guardian, his Royal Highness, the Duke of Gloucester, his aforesaid Royal Highness, the Protector, by this act of thine, and by no desire or willingness of his, must needs obey the wishes of the King and take the aforesaid little Prince from this place by force; which act, in any other case than this, shouldst be a sacrilege, and an offence most grievous unto Heaven.'

"'What! tellest thou me that Gloucester dare to take from a Sanctuary one that hath taken refuge there?' I cried.

"'Indeed, madam, he surely will,' replied the Cardinal.

"'And wilt thou, a Cardinal, permit such an insult to a house of God?' I asked.

"'Ah! your Majesty, thou dost not understand the circumstance,' he replied, with a smile that had cost him his head, before that hump-back came to power.

"'And what strange circumstance, Master Cardinal, is my son placed under, that so permits of armed force, without the fear of God's indignation, to take him from a Sanctuary?' I asked.

"'It is this,' he replied. 'Your son, the Duke of York, is of too tender years to be, and in fact is not, guilty of any offence. Therefore he hath not the right of Sanctuary, which right, according to the strict interpretation of the rules of Holy

Church, belongs solely to those standing in the fear of our Country's laws. This rule,' he continued, as though he shamed to say the words, 'Duke Richard will see fit to resort to, in case your Majesty should be obstinate.'

"'And in this hath he thine approval and help?' I cried.

"'Nay, madam,' he replied, 'I am but the lackey messenger, and therefore am far beneath the honour of being consulted in this matter.'

"'Leave me, thou insolent cur!' I cried; 'How darest thou to stand before my face and mock me? A pretty servant of God art thou, to side with one who hath the position of power, against what thou knowest to be right. Be assured, sirrah, that thou shalt be reported to thy master, the Pope at Rome, for thy disgraceful conduct in thus seconding a powerful villain against a defenceless woman. Now leave me, thou knave, and tell that slave of Hell, the Lord Protector, to send to me to-morrow, and he shall have mine answer, as to whether he shall have my little son or no!'

"Then, sir, he left me," said her Majesty, quietly, as she heaved a great sigh, as though even the memory of this Churchman's departure were a relief to her. "But here's the day come around when I must give my final answer to Gloucester's messenger;" she continued, "and which it is to be I am not yet determined. If I

do refuse to hand my dear son over to the boar, he, verily do I believe, will carry out his threat, and tear him rudely from me. 'Twas with the thought of getting advice from thee—for thou hast had good opportunities for observing the hump-back's habits lately—as to what course I had best take, that I did so anxiously await your coming."

"Ah, madam," I replied, "thou dost honour me over much by asking advice of one which hath had so little experience. Yet, since thou hast so honoured me, I needs must tell the truth. Therefore do I say this:—My natural impulse is to offer what resistance thou canst, in case the Duke doth make use of force. Yet, what little of the cooler stream of reason I have within my blood doth tell me how vain must be the effort to save the little Prince from falling into the Protector's hands, backed as that villain is by such powers as the nobles that surround him.

"Now, shouldst thou grant the Duke's request and hand the little Prince over to his Highness, his position could not be worse than it now is, granting of course, that the Duke of Gloucester dare to carry out his threat, which, I am sad to say, I fear he would not hesitate to do. Then, if thou dost decide to oppose force by force, the result of which, unhappily, must be a victory for the Protector, the little Prince might not receive the same

consideration that he should were he to go to his uncle peaceably."

"Ah, yes, Sir Walter, thou art right," replied the Queen; "yet I had hoped to hear that my tender babe had still a chance of escaping the tusks of the bloody boar."

"May I crave thy pardon, madam?" said Harleston, who had approached whilst the Queen was speaking. "Methinks I have a plan which, if thou hast time to carry it out, may yet keep the little Prince from falling into the hands of his uncle."

"Let me hear it, for the love of Heaven!" cried the Queen, to whom any suggestions of a chance of saving her son from Gloucester was as a voice from Heaven.

"Well, madam, it is this," continued Harleston. "With all expediency let thy son be conducted from this place, without the knowledge of the Duke of Gloucester. No doubt my Lord of Dorset knows of some place, either within the kingdom or across the channel, where the little Prince need have no fear of falling into the Protector's hands."

"Now, by my soul, that is well thought of!" cried the Marquis, as, in his delight, he slapped Frederick on the shoulder.

"Oh! I thank thee, sir, for those words of hope!" cried the Queen as she started from her

seat and, in her excitement, grasped my friend by the hand, as though he were an equal.

Frederick dropped to his knee and touched her fingers gently with his lips.

"But come, we must make haste!" said her Majesty, "and have my little son away from here before Gloucester doth send hither for him. Do thou go, my son," said she, speaking to the Marquis, "and assemble as many of thy followers as thou canst, whilst I prepare young Richard for the flight."

"Again, madam, may I crave permission to offer a suggestion?" interrupted Harleston.

"Indeed I long to hear what thou hast to say," replied the Queen. "And if thine advice shall be as good this time as it was last much unquietness of spirit shall it save me."

"Then, madam," said my friend, "I would advise that thou shouldst send no other than my Lord of Dorset, to escort the little Prince. Were he to be surrounded by a body of armed men he needs must attract attention, and therefore could easily be followed. But, madam, if he goeth unattended, except for one gentleman, no curiosity will be aroused, and then he will leave no trail behind, that may guide his pursuers, in case the Duke of Gloucester has him searched for, which 'tis like he will."

"Again art thou right," replied the Queen. "And yet," she said, as a troubled expression

came into her face, "it likes me not to send my little son so far, without a stronger guard."

"Still, mother, Sir Frederick's plan is safer than if we took a regiment," put in Dorset. "Besides," he continued, "I promise thee that no harm shall come unto my little brother so long as I can wield a sword. And be assured, good mother, that every drop of my heart's blood shall be spilled ere Gloucester shall wrench him from me."

"Cold comfort for a mother," said the Queen, with a sad smile. "Then, if I lose one son, I must needs lose another. But come," she said suddenly, "whilst we talk here precious moments, which might be used in flight, are passing by. Go, my son, and make thee ready with all speed for thy journey, whilst I go to prepare thy little brother."

She followed Dorset from the room, and we were left with the girls, alone.

Then it was that Hazel told me of the happenings at court whilst I was absent therefrom.

The Queen was not long gone. When she returned she was accompanied by her little son, the Duke of York. He was fully dressed for the road.

"Mother, I do not like to leave thee," said he, as they entered.

"Nay, my darling, no more do I desire thee to go," returned his mother, tenderly. "But, Rich-

ard, my pet," she continued, "thou goest with thy brother, so thou needst not to be lonely. Besides, thou shalt not be for long separated from us —I hope," she added.

"But wilt thou follow me shortly, mother dear?"

"I hope to soon be with thee, Richard," replied his mother. Then, as the boy began to cry, she said:—"come, my little man, thou must show thyself to be the true son of a King. Be brave, and do as thy mother doth direct thee; then I shall be proud of my little son."

This had the desired effect upon the proud spirit of his noble father, that was so easily discernible in this young offshoot of the proud house to which he belonged.

At this moment Dorset entered, fully equipped and ready for the road.

The Queen took the Marquis, Harleston and me, to the far end of the room, leaving the little Duke with Hazel and Mary, from whom he seemed most sad to part.

"Thou hast not yet told me where thou art taking Richard," said her Majesty, in a low voice, to Dorset.

"Nay, mother, that have I not," replied he; "for the reason that I yet know not what place of safety can be reached the most easily; and besides I do think it best that no fixed place should be set. When I have come unto some

"Always remember thy mother and this, her advice."
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shelter, I shall leave my little brother in good hands, and return again to thee."

"Methinks that thy plan is a good one," said his mother, after a pause; "but what thinkest thou of it, Sir Frederick?" she asked, as she turned to her new-found counsellor.

"In my poor opinion," replied Harleston modestly, "it is the only course left open. However, methinks 'twere best to put the channel betwixt the little Prince and his uncle, the Protector; for well do I believe that he will have all England searched, so anxious is he, madam, to obtain possession of your son."

"Fear not;" said Dorset, "Gloucester must search with great diligence, indeed, if he be to find the little Duke. But come," he continued, "we must take to the road at once, lest we be interrupted by foul Richard's messenger."

'Twas a sad sight for the eye to gaze on, that parting of the Queen and her little son. As her Majesty clasped the child in her gentle arms, and pressed him to her heart, the strong love of the mother struggled with the cold dignity of the Queen, that had been worn to bind down that ruler of the world—love—and, as is ever the case, love conquered, and the mother sobbed aloud.

"Richard, my dearest treasure, no matter what may happen to thee, always remember thy mother and this, her advice," said the Queen, as her tears fell fast. "Be brave, but gentle, proud, but not

haughty, firm, but not obdurate, generous, but not prodigal, and above all," she concluded, as she released the Duke from her protecting arms, " forget not to revenge any wrong that may be inflicted upon any of your family. That is Heaven's especial favour to the son of a King. Yea, tis even a command."

" But why, good mother, dost thou speak as though I never more might see thee? " asked the poor child, as he struggled vainly to restrain his tears, and show his courage.

" Nay, my dear, thou dost not understand my words. I did but mean that thou shouldst leave me with a full store of advice to help thee through the world; for no one can foresee what may happen to us ere thou dost again join us. Of course we trust that all things will be well, but, in these times, who but a prophet can foresee that which may happen within the next revolution of the sun."

Then, after bidding their sisters and us all farewell, Dorset and young Richard made their exit and departure from the Sanctuary, by an unfrequented way, that they might avoid the danger of being seen by eyes to which they might be known.

As Dorset placed the boy upon his palfrey the child gave way completely, and, turning to his mother, with outstretched arms, a world of sadness in his tear-dimmed eyes, he cried out, like

the wail of a soul but new-condemned to an eternity of woe:—"Oh! mother dear, send me not from thee. Let me abide with thee and with my sisters; for now I feel within my bosom here something that maketh me to feel that if I leave thee now I ne'er shall see thee more!"

"Nay, nay, my dearest, God, the King of Kings, will not be so cruel. He will again unite those which truly love him and keep his commandments. Break not one of these by not obeying thy mother. Go with thy brother, my dear, and thus escape the danger that here must soon o'ertake thee, if thou dost tarry. Go, go! our prayers follow thee, and may God protect thee and still have thee in his keeping!"

Dorset seized the palfrey's rein and started on his journey. The Queen mother stood gazing after them, and her lips still muttered prayers. Soon they were lost to view, as they turned a corner in the path.

As the Queen slowly re-entered the Sanctuary the bell from the chapel began to toll for some poor soul whose body was about to be returned to mother earth, to be the food of worms. As the bell rang out, like a soul-rending cry of anguish, the Queen started as though she had been stabbed. "A bad omen," I heard her mutter, as she leaned upon mine arm.

CHAPTER XVIII

RICHARD TRIUMPHS

WHEN Gloucester discovered how he had been duped by the Queen his feelings can better be imagined than described. However, he was too clever a man, by far, to show his disappointment openly, or even to let the world know that he had been outwitted. He had the audacity to have the statement quietly circulated, in such a manner as to give to each person the impression that he was the trusted possessor of a state secret, that an attempt had been made to abduct the Duke of York, but that it had miscarried. "Therefore," said the Duke's friends, "it has become necessary for the Lord Protector, in the proper fulfilment of his duties of the high office with which the people have honoured him, to take every precaution to prevent another attempt of the same kind from being more successful."

"Yea," said the gossips, who were no doubt paid by the Protector, "'tis even feared that the King himself may be the object of their next attempt. Therefore the good Lord Protector, in his wisdom, and by reason of his great solicitude for the safety of the King—his lord and master

—hath deemed it best that both the young King and his little brother, the Duke of York, be placed in safety, within the strong walls of the noble Tower that Cæsar,—though a heathen, was yet no doubt the instrument of God,—laid the foundations of. And, unquestionably, the Lord foresaw just such a necessity for such a strong place of safety when he compelled that ancient pagan to thus work for his ends."

When my friend and I heard this news, my children, our hearts were indeed sad. Remember, my dears, we knew not whether the statement that the little Duke had been taken by Gloucester were true or no. At first we thought it but a device of Gloucester's to hold the confidence of the people; but upon more careful consideration we came to the conclusion that even the Protector could scarcely have the audacity to thus risk the consequences of such a deception being discovered, which, according to the rules of all common sense, it must in time be. This conclusion in no wise served to relieve our feelings of disappointment and sorrow, on the Queen's account. We could not help but feel in some measure responsible for the revenge of Gloucester for the attempt made by the Queen to have her son escape him; for such we considered the confinement of the Princes to the Tower.

However, on the day following the King's removal to the prison we again visited the Sanc-

tuary, or rather some of its inmates, and were rejoiced to learn that the Queen had received a letter from Dorset, which informed her of the successful manner in which they had escaped, not only capture, but even suspicion. Consequently we found the Queen in a most happy state of mind. This contentment was doomed to be short lived, for we were reluctantly compelled to inform her of her son's imprisonment and of the reports circulating about the Duke of York's attempted abduction.

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However, we had no great time in which to wonder what was Gloucester's object in thus causing the young King to be placed under restraint, and the report to be circulated that his brother kept him company.

The next news to startle the court, and cause consternation among the friends of the Queen and exultation in the ranks of her adversaries, was the condemnation of the three unhappy prisoners at Pomfret—Rivers, Grey and Vaughan.

Again was it our unhappy duty to be the bearers of this most heavy news to that poor woman of woe, the unfortunate wife of the great Edward.

"What new sorrow do ye bring me now; for well do I know that countenances painted thus heavy with the brush of sadness must be but the

dark covers to another book of woe?" said her Majesty, as my friend and I, whose sole duties now seemed to be the bearing of heavy news, were shown into her presence.

"Uncommon bad news we bring, madam;" I replied; "yet it is such as we might all have expected, and therefore do I hope that your Majesty may bear it better than thou couldst have done had it been unexpected."

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When we had finished the relation of this latest tale of Richard's vengeance on the faithful to the Queen her Majesty seemed stupefied with grief. She sat as one who hath just received a heavy blow with the flat side of a sword,—dazed and benumbed and still incapable of raising protest against the causer of the pain. Then with her hand she feebly tried to brush away from before her eyes some cloud that did obstruct her vision. A look of hopeless resignation then settled on her features, and two silent tears ran slowly down her cheeks. A heavy sigh, like the parting of a soul from its earthy home and comrade, escaped her, and she asked in a voice in which was nothing but the tone of resigned indifference:—"When do they die?"

"This day, madam; even now."

"I had scarce looked for such expediency," she remarked, without the least emotion.

"What do ye think Gloucester's intentions may be with regard to my son, the King?" she asked in that unnatural voice.

"Oh, madam," I replied, glad at last to be able to tell her something not unhappy, "even now the Counsellors are met within the Tower to decide upon the coronation of his Majesty."

"And doth Lord Hastings there attend?"

"He does, madam."

"And the Protector, I presume?"

"Ay, madam, the Duke of Gloucester seems bent on having his Majesty's coronation take place at once; and therefore, at least so says report, he doth attend in person that his presence there may urge the Counsellors to set an early day for the ceremony; 'For,' say the Protector's confidants, 'the Duke desires to have the weight of full responsibility, that now rests upon his shoulders, in a considerable measure lightened.' But, madam," I added, "it is for thee to judge the weight of these reports."

"Hastings," said her Majesty, without taking any apparent note of my remark, "though he doth dislike me much, still, methinks, is loyal to my son, if for no other reason than for the favours the boy's father showed him, even against my pleasure."

Then, after sitting silent whilst one might tell an hundred, she spoke out suddenly, as though she thought aloud:—"Surely his uncle dare not

harm my pretty Edward! Oh, no! not while my little Richard doth remain to be his avenger," she added, with a smile of satisfaction.

The Queen had evidently forgot the presence of her woeful messengers, so absorbed was she in her deep train of thought.

"A pleasant thing it is indeed to be the widow of a King, and the mother of a King," she said, again speaking to her heart. "Great, powerful, respected, happy. Ha, ha, ha! Yes, respected and happy.

"Hush! fear not; he shall not harm thee. Thou art with thy mother; and thy mother is the Queen. We had to fly to Sanctuary before, when Margaret had success. But look how thy father did defeat her, and again we came to power. Thy father is the King, and a great and gallant warrior. Again will he trample on his enemies. There, there, fear not, all things shall be well, all things shall be well. There's a good pet; go to sleep in thy mother's arms as thou didst years ago," and she patted an imaginary child in the gentle, soothing way known only to a mother.

I glanced enquiringly at Harleston.

He nodded.

We walked on tip-toe to the door, and stole softly from the room.

The sorrow of this woman was too sacred to be looked on by vulgar mortal eyes.

"What punishment can be severe enough to repay the causer of such woe for his accursed acts?" I asked of my friend, when we were alone in the room adjoining the one we had just left.

"Fear not," he replied; "his punishment must overtake him.

"Gloucester is clever. But no man is so clever that he can deceive the whole world for long. 'Tis possible to do so for a time; and Gloucester is doing it. But wait," added Harleston; "success is like everything else in this world; each man has a certain amount allotted to him when he begins life. If carefully husbanded, and put to a proper use, it multiplies. But let the possessor use it in an improper manner and the supply is soon cut off. 'Tis like the pulling of a heavy boat through the water, by means of a slender line; if pulled gently, and with great care, success must crown your efforts. But attempt to force the vessel faster through the water, and the line parts and the boat is lost. Richard is now attempting to draw in the ship of power, laden with the cargo of sovereignty. He hath a firm hold on the line. There are many obstacles betwixt the ship and Gloucester. By patience, more than that possessed by mortals, these all might be removed. But Richard, encouraged by his success in brushing some aside, will pull harder on the line. It cannot bear the strain of this impatient force. It breaks, and Gloucester tumbles

from his height of audacity, to be dashed to pieces on the rocks of consequence."

"Dost thou then think he will dare to usurp the throne, now that the King's young brother hath escaped falling into his power?" I asked.

"Why not?" he replied.

"That which the Queen said methinks is true; Hastings will be loyal; but after the example we have to-day, the execution of Rivers, Grey and Vaughan, what may we expect from the Chancellor's influence? Were he to oppose the Protector he might be the next to post to Heaven. No," continued my friend, "we must not look for succour, from the tyranny of Richard, to any source but the whole people. They, when they are all united, have the power to force him to do right. But no single noble is sufficiently powerful to cope successfully with Gloucester."

"But how long must this crime and tyranny endure, ere a period be put to them?"

"Not long. Richard is now building a tower of crime. Such structures are but frail houses in which to dwell. Presently a strong tempest of popular indignation will sweep across the land; the structure must fall, and the builder shall be crushed beneath the ruins. He is building it in great haste; therefore it shall fall the sooner."

Harleston spoke with such confidence, as though the whole scene had been enacted before

his eyes, that one could not help but believe him to be right.

Just then the girls entered. This put an end to our gloomy conversation, for which I, for one, was glad. The close life of the Sanctuary was now beginning to make the effects of its work visible in the paler hues and careworn looks of the girls' faces.

"Oh, Walter dear, I am so tired of this life of sorrow!" said Hazel, when we had strolled to that part of the room most distant from Mary and Frederick.

"Yes, my fair one, and I can see no reason why thou shouldst forever share the sorrows and burdens of others, even though they are the troubles of those which thou lovest well. When the present situation may change, God alone can tell.

"Remember the promise that thou didst make, when we lived in happier times. When our path seemed flooded with the light of Heaven. Then came this heavy cloud, that seemeth ever to grow blacker. Let us sweep on from beneath its chilling shadow, and let the sun of love and happiness, as we stroll among the flowers, beneath the trees of our joint home, drive away the troubled memories of this heart-chilling imprisonment within the dreary walls of a Sanctuary, made yet more sad by the unfortunate family which here takes refuge. Thou canst not help them by thus

sharing their sorrows, and it doth but make two other souls unhappy." As I spoke these words the scene, drawn by my mind as I paced back and forth across my room that happy night of the last ball given by Edward at Windsor, when all my ambitions seemed about to be realized, and yet when the first clouds were gathering, came again clearly to my mind. I therefore waited, with the pain of expectation, for Hazel to answer.

When, after a short silence, in which she seemed weighing her reasons both *pro* and *con* granting my request, her answer came, and was partly what I had hoped to hear, and wholly what I had expected.

"Yes, Walter, the promise that I made to thee that night, when we were both so light of heart, and which now seemeth such a long time since, I long to now fulfil. Yet," she continued, with a sigh, "my gratitude for those which have ever been so kind to me doth whisper to my love and it bids it wait, for but a little space, and show them some sacrifice, to repay them for their kindness. Still do I promise thee," she continued quickly, as she saw my jaw drop in disappointment, "to wait a short time only; and if, after the King's coronation, the condition of the Queen's family changes not, then will I ask my dear foster-mother for her consent to our union taking place at once."

"Wilt thou indeed?"

"Ay, indeed; though even this I fear to be selfish in me, and looketh as though I cared not for the troubles of my friends, when I can be happy whilst they suffer."

"Nay, not so," I replied, as some of the reasoning of Harleston came to my mind. "Life is given but that it may be enjoyed. Some accomplish this purpose in one way; some, another. Sorrow is sent but that it may teach us how to enjoy happiness the better. We all must have our sorrow. Some have more, and some less of this chastening agent's presence. The reason for this I know not, unless it be that some of us require a more severe training ere we are capable of following our especial path in life, without straying off upon by-ways that nature never intended we should tread. Some, I will admit, seem never to have found their way. The consequence is, remorseless Nature, who departs not from her laws, with stern hand of iron scourges him full hard. Sometimes this drives him to his more fitting path; again it maketh him to despair, and, filled with spleen and useless stubbornness, he ploddeth on along a path not suited to his step, when there, within reach of his sight, had he but turned his head, doth lie his own fair way. Some few hills there are, of course; but these are suited to his stature."

"By my troth thou hast been changed by Fred-

erick into a full-fledged philosopher," laughed Hazel. "But tell me the lesson that this should teach to me, and why I should not longer tarry with the Queen."

"'Tis this," I replied. "Her Majesty's path is now blocked up with obstacles. 'Tis right that thou shouldst sympathize with her, and cheer her on. Yea, if it be within thy power to lend to her assistance, thou art bound by the bonds of love and gratitude to give it. Still, it is not required of thee, by either of these ennobling masters, that thou shouldst tread her path thyself. Nay," I continued, as I saw a look that told me I had gained my point steal o'er her face, "'tis even wrong for thee to leave the way that Nature chose for thee to cheer."

"Thine eloquence hath won me from the doubt that haunted me and made me to feel ungrateful. But truly, Walter, thou must stop thy bursts of poetic speeches, lest in the future thy songs do change the minds of people, and Master Chaucer's wit then be forgot," and she laughed in mine earnest face, until I joined her in her gaiety.

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When we reached the Palace imagine our surprise and horror to learn that Lord Hastings, whilst at the meeting in the Tower, to discuss the coronation of young Edward, had, through some thoughtless remark dropped in the presence of

Gloucester, given to that most murderous tyrant a poor excuse for putting on a towering rage and ordering the execution of the Chancellor. Seized as he sat at the table of the council he was hurried, by that murderer, Tyrrell, whose list of crimes were now being added to with lightning swiftness, to the black-stained block within the courtyard of the Tower, and there his head was severed from the trunk, and the bleeding trophy carried to the Duke. A fitting meal it was, indeed, for the vengeance of such a man to feed on.

This speech of Hastings' that had caused his soul to follow, within so short a time, the spirits of his rivals, who met their fate at Pomfret, served also, as I verily believe Richard had foreplanned it should, to postpone the discussion of the young King's coronation.

"Richard hath pulled harder on the line," said Harleston, when we had heard the complement of the news—namely, that Lord Stanley had been wounded, by accident, during the arrest of Hastings. "Another obstacle hath been removed from the course of his heavy ship and cargo. The line still bears the strain. Wait with patience and expectancy: he'll pull again; observe the result."

CHAPTER XIX

A MESSAGE IS SENT TO RICHMOND

HARLESTON'S statement, that the line of Richard's success must part, and that he could not gain the ship's cargo, proved to be wrong. Gloucester had met with success where'er he turned.

Hastings' death had been received with but grumblings of discontent and not, as we had hoped, with clamorous outbursts of bloody insurrection.

Stanley, for remonstrating with Gloucester, in an attempt to save his friend, Hastings, from his fate, was now confined within the Tower's walls. The Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Ely here kept him company.

Whisperings there now were of the coronation of a different King from Edward. Richard's full hand was now being shown to the whole broad world. Most of those which lived at court had seen it, ere this last card was laid upon the board.

Rumours to the effect that young Edward's father's marriage with the Lady Grey, the young King's mother, had been illegal now had a noble circulation. 'Twas whispered in the court, and

gossipped o'er. 'Twas the sole story on the tradesman's lips. The urchin in the street had heard it told, and each ear did either credit or despise the tale, that Edward, the father of our present King, had been united by the bonds of wedlock with the Lady Eleanor Talbot, daughter of the Earl of Shrewsbury, previous to his union with the Lady Grey. This tale, 'tis scarce necessary for me to say, was but one of many similar inventions of Richard to throw discredit on the rightful Sovereign, and thus help him to reach that awful height to which he was determined to climb.

As my friend and I were one day passing the great Church of St. Paul, we were attracted by a surging crowd of people trying, as best they might, to see some poor soul who had just finished doing penance in a sheet of white, and who now stood, in pitiful abashment, upon the church's steps. Behold her as she stands there, an object of curiosity and derision. Hear the coarse jests of the vulgar rabble, who, in their delight at the sight of fallen power, hurl at her defenseless ears all the filthy epithets in the vocabulary of the indecent. Compare her authority of yesterday with her degradation of to-day. Not one of those who were helped to power and greatness, by this woman, now speak one word of sympathy or regret. Such a scene should find in Hell more fitting surroundings for its tragic action. So could I

imagine the condemned souls revel and domineer when a Prince of Darkness hath been reduced to a lower level. Another triumph for the Protector. This is Jane Shore, the mistress of the late lamented Edward. Gloucester, the better to deceive the people, and make them to believe in his purity and religious ardour, compelled this poor woman, whose sole crime against the state was that her Creator had given her such beauty as to cause the amorous Edward to cast a longing eye upon her—which, with that fiery Sovereign, was ever the prologue to a history of a woman's loss of character—to thus do penance, draped in a sheet, before the insulting eyes of the scum of the city's population.

"Look at the shameless hussy standing, with bowed head, as though she cared a hair for all this gentle penance. See how she stands, blushing, as a properer dame might do," said a heartless wretch, dressed in the garb of a gentleman.

Harleston stooped and, taking up a stone, he handed it to this fellow, with these words:—"There, my fine fellow, hurl thou this pebble at the woman there. 'Tis much to be regretted, sir, that thou didst not live in the days of Christ. He asked for such an one as thou to hurl the stone at Mary Magdalene."*

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* Harleston's knowledge of scripture was evidently not great. K. M.

"And who art thou, sir, to criticise my words?"

"A gentleman," replied Harleston with a slight bow. Then, as the fellow stared stupidly into his face, my friend again said:—"I suppose, sir, that thou dost not e'en comprehend the meaning of that name. I should have used another word. This, then, is the definition of that article with which you have no doubt often met, and still you understand not. First, he is a man; second, his speech is courteous, to those whose manner doth deserve such speech; third, he protects the weak and defenceless, and doth not insult a helpless woman, as thou this day hast done; fourth, he is possessed of a quality known by the name of honour, the which to brush against or attempt to stain means death to the transgressor or himself; last, and yet first above all else, he must be brave, and not submit to insult such as thou dost bear; and 'twould be death for one to strike a blow upon his cheek, as I now do to thee." And, suiting the action to the word, Harleston gave him a stinging slap upon the ear that almost caused the other to drop upon his knees.

My friend's judgment of the knave was right. He was, as all these blackguards are, a coward through and through. A plenteous supply of bluster had he, to be sure, and this he commenced to fling at Harleston. However, he got not far in his list of compliments; for my friend, losing

all patience with this blackguarding knave, took him by the ear, that now was the colour of a fiery sunset, and, turning him about, he placed his knee beneath his doublet tail and hurled him upon his hands and knees among the legs and feet of the surging crowd about. I had never known Harleston to act thus before, and greatly was I surprised to see him so ready to pick up a quarrel.

When we left the crowd before the Church and continued on our way I thought to find him still heated with his indignation. But in this I had again misjudged this man whose brain seemed balanced with such an exactness. He was as quiet and unruffled as though he had been but talking with a priest about some books, of which he was most fond.

"Strange," said he in musing tone, "that men so love to see their fellows lowered. Why can they not mourn for their sorrows and exult when others do succeed? Instead of doing this, they glory in another's fall, and when the downcast tries to regain his feet, cruel and remorseless blows are heaped upon his head, till the poor creature, hopeless of success, lies back there where he falls, among the quick and devouring sands of vice, or other misery. Still he sinks lower, and, as he disappears, the sands put on their faces of harmlessness and tempting beauty, to await another victim. And the cold world jeers at the

sufferer's dying struggles, and laughs, and he's soon forgot."

"Why, my friend, thou art quite mournful," I remarked.

"Nay, by my troth, mine heart was never lighter. Misunderstand me not. The picture that my mind now draws is sad, 'tis true. But verily do I tell thee, Bradley, mine eye enjoys the sight. What song is there so sweet as that which telleth to our hearts a tale of woe?"

* * * * * *

Again doth Richard triumph. The ship sails quickly through the water, brushing aside the difficulties that would impede its progress. Gloucester steps o'er the rail and takes possession of the cargo.

Thus, after the disgraceful scene in the Cathedral of St. Paul, when Doctor Shaw preached his now notorious sermon on the bastardy of young Edward and his brother, and after the Lord Mayor and the Duke of Buckingham had wrung from a small gathering of London's citizens an unwilling consent to the crown being placed upon the head of Richard, instead of on our gentle, rightful, boyish King, Richard was crowned with great pomp and ceremony, and ruled England as the rightful heir by birth, whilst his young nephew lay within the Tower, uncrowned, a stain attempting to hang upon his name, and treated as

a malefactor, who should have worn the diadem of England.

Richard's court was now removed to Crosby Place, where the boar bedecked himself and his surroundings with all the gaudy finery, of which he was so fond.

Then whisperings began to circulate, to the effect that both of the little Princes (for the people all believed that little York was also there) had been murdered in the Tower. This tale, which soon became general court gossip, was never contradicted by the friends of our new King Richard, and therefore it soon came to be believed about the court, from whence the people had it, and believed. Some said that Tyrrell, with an order from the usurping King, went to the Tower and took full charge thereof for but one night. That with him went three others which, whilst the young Princes slept, smothered them to death. This was the version most generally believed, and, to my mind, it indeed seemeth a likely tale, in so far, of course, as it refers to young Edward; for well did my friend and I know that little York was far from London at that time; though where he was we knew not. We dreaded telling to the Queen this news, and therefore waited for some time before we again visited the Sanctuary. When at length we did go, we were saved from again inflicting torture on this poor woman. Lord Stanley, who had

been released from his imprisonment but a few days previous and now had been appointed to the office of Steward at the Palace, had been there before us and told the Queen the whole sad story of how her son had, in the night, been murdered whilst he slept.

This time the Queen was not resigned nor stupefied. Bold determination and a hunger for revenge were imprinted on her features.

When I look back to those harsh, cruel days of misery for that woman, I compare her, in my mind, with those savage tribes which dwell in that distant land beyond the seas, discovered by that Genoese sailor. 'Twas told to me, by Cabot and his son, that they, when injured, show but little spleen; but with deliberation and the greatest care they plan, with wonderous skill, some grand invention that enables them to have revenge in the most complete and properest of ways.

Cold and deliberate was the ex-Queen, as she informed us that she had sent her son, Dorset (which had returned, after leaving the little Duke of York in a Sanctuary in France) with a letter to the Earl of Richmond, who then resided, in exile, at the court of Brittany, asking him to take up arms in her cause, and his own, and fight King Richard, with the crown of England as the stake.

"I have decided on this course," said the ex-Queen, "because I realize that my son, the Duke

of York, may never rule so long as Richard lives. If Richmond doth accept mine offer, and if he wins the crown away from the murderous Usurper, then will I make him regent during the minority of my little Richard. All this I have set forth distinctly in my letter to the Earl. I also promised him my daughter Elizabeth's hand in marriage. Such offers, methinks, no sane man would refuse, unless he be a coward, which 'tis not possible for him to be. 'Tis true he belongs to the Lancastrian party, which hath ever been our enemies; but, under the circumstances in which I now find myself placed, I cannot choose, but must accept that which is best for my poor son's welfare. Therefore I have asked for Richmond's aid."

"Madam," said Harleston, when Elizabeth had finished speaking, "I pray that thou wilt pardon the liberty I am about to take, in making a remark about thine own affairs. Mine excuse for doing so is that thou, madam, hast honoured me ere this by asking mine advice."

"Speak out, Sir Frederick," said Elizabeth. "Well dost thou know that no word of thine, intended for my help, will be considered as impertinent."

"Then, madam, I would ask if thou dost consider it as safe to thus invite the Earl of Richmond to your aid? Dost thou not fear that he—should he be successful—will claim the throne as

his very own by right of conquest by the sword? 'Tis but a possibility, madam, but methinks 'tis worthy of consideration."

"But how could he claim the throne, having no right thereto?"

"Richard hath taken it."

"Ay, true, true, true!" wailed the poor Queen, as she walked about the room, wringing her hands.

"Dost thou not think, madam," continued Harleston, "that it would be better if thou wert to try and win over Buckingham to thy cause?"

"He is the friend of Richard."

"Ay, madam; but he is also ambitious. Two such men as he and the Usurper cannot for long agree. Richard must fear that some day Buckingham's prestige with the people will be too great. No doubt some jealousy doth exist already. Have Lord Stanley, in thy behalf, offer to the Duke some noble inducement to bring him to thy side. The people, indignant at the murder of thy son, could soon be tempted to revolt and make up a strong force; drive forth the Usurper from the throne and place the crown upon the rightful head."

"But how shall I prevent the Earl of Richmond from coming to mine aid, now that I have once invited him?"

"Prevent him not, madam. He shall be of the greatest possible assistance. He and your

brother-in-law, the Duke of Buckingham, united should face the boar; and then, when victory doth rest upon their arms, the Duke can hold the Earl in check."

"A happy thought; I'll act upon it straight away. Ah! Sir Frederick, what should I do without thine ever sage advice? Pray God the time will soon come when I can reward my friends, with more than thanks. When my son cometh to his own thou, Sir Frederick, shalt be his Counsellor."

This promise was doomed to never be fulfilled.

CHAPTER XX

BEFORE THE TOURNAMENT

ANGRY were the people with Richard for his savage murder of the young and rightful King. Discontent and a proper desire to punish the criminal for his act were discernible in the sullen manner in which the Usurper was received where'er he went among them. Scowls, and not resounding cheers, greeted him as he passed through the streets of London, as was his almost daily habit.

Richard was not slow to comprehend the cause, and see what should be the outcome, of this unpopularity, were it permitted to take a firmer root in the minds of the people.

Some people, I know, contend that the best plan for killing discontent and opposition is to notice them not and they, in time, will realize their insignificance, and die by cold neglect. To me this seemeth but a poor device for ridding one of that which doth torment him. Methinks it is like the neglecting of a weed, in the hope that it will come to be disheartened by reason of its lack of opposition and wither up and die. To

my poor way of thinking 'tis better, far, to remove the weed, with all its roots intact.

Richard was evidently of the same way of thinking; for he at once proceeded to remove this opposing growth, with all expediency. Subsequent events shall show whether or no the roots came with the stalk and leaves. To accomplish his purpose it was necessary for him to please the people and gain their affection. The most easy and direct way to do this was to, in some manner, contribute to their happiness. In what way could this be so well accomplished as by appealing to the warlike spirit of England, by holding a grand tournament. Ever hath it been the custom of our country's rulers to hold these martial gatherings whenever the good will of all classes is desired. Richard was not slow to follow the example of his predecessors. Therefore was it given out that our generous-hearted Sovereign, to in some small way show his appreciation of the honour done him by the people when they reposed the trust of England's crown with him, would straight-way give the grandest exhibition of all forms of war-like skill that ever England gazed with wondering eyes upon.

Catesby, who had been absent from court ever since the Usurper's coronation, on some business of Richard's (for now he seemed to be to Richard the properest man, though to all others a scoundrel) about this time returned. For this, my

dears, I was truly pleasured; for dearly did I then desire an opportunity to be revenged on him for his insult to Hazel. I was determined that nothing should now prevent our meeting; for if he did not willingly enter for the contests I would openly challenge him to fight, the which to refuse, as ye all do know, would stamp him as a coward throughout all Christendom. This I knew well he would not bear; for Catesby, no matter what his failings were, was no physical coward.

Long seemed the time whilst we, with the spirit of impatience, were waiting for the tournament.

Hazel and I planned and decided on my making some excuse and leaving the court of Richard, so soon as the jousts should be ended. Settle down we would and live in peace and quiet within our happy home, far from the strife and intrigue of the court. 'Tis true I did not promise to lay aside the sword and shield forever. On the contrary, faithfully did I promise the ex-Queen to aid her party when the proper time arrived. And, besides, I had an oath to be fulfilled.

No longer could I bear to serve the murderous tyrant, even for mine ends. Indeed he treated me with great civility and some consideration. Yet ever would there rise before my memory's eye the traitorous scene at Stony Stratford. 'Twas when Richard smiled I feared him most. Beware, my children, of a man who smileth on ye all

too frequently. Such men are seldom to be trusted. Never did I fall asleep without the fear ahaunting me that I should never gaze upon the sun again; but that the three which murdered our young King would rid our present ruler of one which visited Elizabeth; for no hope of mine could be so sanguine as to cause me to believe that I had thus far escaped Richard's ever-watchful eye.

At length the day before the commencement of the tournament came around, and knights and squires all were busy with the work of preparation.

The place chosen by the King for the holding of the joust was just beyond the city's gates, between London and Westminster, and in the direction of the setting sun, that cast its fiery rays along the bosom of the earth, that it might point out to each separate champion the levelest spot for the pitching of his tent. Where'er the ground had received a wound, and the scar remained, the King of Day, as he settled down to rest, did paint the surrounding turf and leave a darker spot upon the earth, to guide the warrior's servants from their putting up his canvas house.

My friend and I both occupied the one tent, which was both high and broad.

My faithful Michael, and our other servants, bustled about in preparation for the morrow's work.

Pennons and streamers of England's noblest sons now floated on the evening flower-scented breeze, which bore in its fairy arms the sounds of the armourer's anvils, as the men worked, putting on some fine completing touches. Some of these pleasant and familiar sounds were worn to such a thinness as to scarcely have existence, they having travelled from the far end of the field and, in their flight, visited the ears of many knights and squires who, fond of this sweet martial music, consumed a part each one. Others there were ranging in bodily strength until they reached a rich, full ring, proceeding from before our own tent door, where our armourers examined the suits given us by the late King Edward, and which had never since been tested with the lance.

The sun at length sank beneath the floor of earth, and the windows of Heaven began to throw forth their each particular ray of light. As we sat there, watching those far away, twinkling points, I could not refrain from wondering why the Saints and Angels there all seem so busy in the still night time; as can be seen by their passing and repassing of the windows, in never ceasing numbers, each casting a fleeting shadow as he goes. As the light on earth kept fading, more shades in Heaven were drawn aback, as though the kindly folk up there would lend to us more cheer.

Then the pale and trouble-featured moon raised up her hairless head above the earth's surface, and slowly climbed she up the Heaven's arch.

As the sounds of the armourers and the grooms died out, the nightingale did make his voice more plainly heard, as he hurled down, from his perch beside the field, upon our ears, his darts of Heaven's own joy. Aslanting did the music come, as borne by the gentle evening breeze it fell, like April's rain, into our ears and drenched our hearts with sweetness.

The wide-eyed frogs, far from the field, as they sat on their floating thrones, flung, from their baggy throats, at the stars, as countless as themselves, their quavering coward-challenges of battle. Yet no doubt these were as well meant as some we should hear to-morrow.

The moon now stood well up the sky and therefore, when the flap was closed a trifle, shone not far back into the tent.

The nightingale had ceased to sing.

The frogs still hurled their insolence.

Frederick and I, who had been in silence sitting for some time, arose and walked back under our covering. Michael followed, and, when we had laid down, stretched his huge frame across the opening. How like a lifeless statue there he lay; his arms locked o'er his chest. 'Twas seven feet of Hercules, as broad as two good men. Gazing

at this picture of strength and loyalty, the latter shown in his firm-cut, honest face, with our shields beneath our heads, my friend and I sank into sleep.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TOURNAMENT

AFTER a night of refreshing, sweet oblivion we awakened bright and strong, well fitted for a day of tilting. It was uncommon early to be stirring; but Richard had given out that the games should commence about the hour of ten; therefore it was necessary to rise early, in order that we might have ample time in which to look over the ground and judge its character, previous to our arming for the fray.

Cool and fresh was the morning; but the cloudless sky and bright-faced sun were indications of a greater warmth when the day should be further advanced.

Shortly after we had breakfasted the King, who had spent the night upon the field instead of at his Palace, rode around the lists, attended by Buckingham, Stanley, Lovell, Ratcliffe and Catesby. Richard wore not his armour; but all of the others were fully armed, but for the lack of their helms; instead of which they wore caps of velvet.

"Ah! Walter, thou art at last to have an op-

portunity to slake thy thirst for vengeance; for Catesby seemeth ready to take to the field at once," said Harleston, as we stood at the opening of our tent and watched them as they made their tour of inspection.

I smiled my satisfaction.

"Wilt thou ride with headless spear, or wilt thou use the point, and make thy prize his blood, as well as arms?"

"I desire not his steed nor arms," I answered. "No, Frederick, I would rather have the last red drop that now is in his heart than wear King Richard's crown. Long have I kept me quiet, and but little have I spoken of the insulting cur since first mine ears did hear of his black-coward's act. Well dost thou know the human heart, my friend, and mine the best of all. It must be plain to thee that when the coals are left upon the hearth, withouten wood to cause a showy flame, they burn with greater, though more quiet, heat. I made a promise to the Lady Hazel that I would not challenge him to meet me in a duel. Therefore have I held my peace, and waited for such an opportunity as this for working my revenge upon him. If I can kill the knave upon this field I'll do so with as light a heart as any ever worn by man."

"Right, right! my friend," cried Frederick. "I wondered how thou, for this long time since, didst tie down that impatient spirit of thine, and

wait with patience for thy vengeance. Thou art a true knight, Sir Walter. Mild when not roused; but when thy spleen is stirred thou art as fiery as the devil," and he grasped my hand and slapped me on the shoulder, as was his familiar custom.

The people from the city commenced now to arrive. Some were mounted, but the majority either rode in carts or came in the less pretentious style—afoot.

"By Heaven!" said Frederick, "and they stop not coming in such numbers we knights shall be compelled to withdraw us from the field and leave it to the tradesmen."

"Come," said I, "'tis time that we should arm. What ho! Michael! where the devil art thou?" Michael, contrary to his habit, did not appear when I called. I walked to the tent door and called again. Then, as I looked beyond the barriers that kept the spectators from crowding into the space reserved for the tents of the knights, I saw him just leaving two old ladies, after having procured for them comfortable seats, in a position from where their eyes commanded an excellent view of the field; and being in that part opposite to where sat the King. I stood in the doorway, awaiting Michael's return, and wondering who the old ladies were to whom he showed such attention.

When Michael, as he hurried back, raised his eyes and beheld me gazing at him, I heard him

mutter, in his short, quick way, which ever so amused me:—"Hill!"

When he came up to me he said:—"Pardon sor; but sor, thim ladies, Oi'm jist after asittin' down, is friends o' a wourthy and gallant knoight who hath ivir bin most koind to a poor orphan loike moysilf, sor; and they axed me to foind me a sate fer thim, sor, and Oi hadn't the heart to refuse thim, sor; though had Oi known that yer honour wanted me so soon Oi'd have bin a dale quicker than Oi was, sor."

"I knew not that thou wert known so well among the knighthood of England," I answered with a smile. "But come, Michael, thou needst not to crave pardon of Sir Walter Bradley when thou dost serve such a noble purpose. The ladies, whether known to us or not, come before all true knights or gentlemen; and 'tis when we pay respect to them that we do ennoble ourselves."

"Yis sor," said Michael, as he buckled on my breast plate. "Oi knew that yer honour would pardon me fer lavin' ye, whin Oi tould what moine errand was." This as he buckled on a shoulder-piece.

"Uh! what a pity, sor, to have sich armour, with all that gould in it, dinted with the pint o' a spear," said he, when he had fastened on all but my helm.

The trumpets now sounded a warning blast, and the heralds rode forth and entered the lists

at the southern extremity, all their gay trappings tossing in the pleasant morning wind.

Michael, after finishing his employment, by fastening on my sword and lacing my splendid head-piece, went to the pile of lances, from which he selected one both straight and heavy, but having no point.

"Not that to-day, Michael; for the rules of this joust do permit of pointed weapons."

"Uh! sure thin, sor, that impudint Catesby 'll take his dinner with his master, the divil, this day; fer will do Oi know, sor, that he's the varmint yer honour's after."

I always forgave Michael for his familiarity; for without it he should not have been Michael, and never did it harm me. At this remark about Catesby I merely smiled and said:—"Have a headless spear ready, lest I do need one also."

"Oi'll do that same, sor; but Oi'd loike to see yon Catesby's blood upon the pint o' this, sor," and he motioned with his head in the direction of mine enemy's tent and patted the point of the lance. The faithful fellow always looked on Catesby as an enemy common to himself and me.

Again the trumpets rang out full merrily, both long and loud. Then the heralds, which had halted in the centre of the field, separated, one remaining in the centre and the other two riding with their backs to one another until one reached

the North and the other the South end of the lists, where each took his especial post. Then the one which had remained in the centre called out the rules of this passage of arms.

After the customary prologue, that I ever considered tedious and unnecessary; for Heaven knows even the balance of these fellow's speeches is long enough, he at length reached the part that he had set out to say.

"Know, all ye true knights and gentlemen of his Most Gracious Majesty of England, Ireland and of France, or of whatever other Sovereign King ye may be faithful subjects, that any knight, of proper standing and untarnished honour, shall here be permitted to enter for these tilts. All such aforesaid valiant knights and gentlemen, which have not ere this had their names placed upon the recorder's list, are hereby warned to do so now, with all expediency, or be content to live without the honour of taking part in these noble contests. Any untarnished knight now has the privilege of challenging to combat, either courteous or martial, any other such knight, whose name is on the record for this joust. When such a number of these tilts as his Most Gracious Majesty doth consider to be proper shall have been decided, from amongst the names contained in the recorder's sheets shall be selected, by means of draft, two parties of twelve knights each, to which said parties shall be added one other knight

for each party, which knight shall have the honourable post of leader, each of his particular party, by whom he shall be drawn.

"In tilts of courtesy lances without heads must alone be used. In the more warlike contests both knightly weapons may be used at the discretion of, and the manner most pleasing to, the combatants.

"Any contest shall be considered at an end only at such time as his Majesty, King Richard, shall see fit to signal for its stoppage by the honourable marshals of the field, or when one or the other of the opposing champions shall have owned himself up defeated.

"His Most Gracious Majesty will decide who is the victor in each separate contest; and to the victor shall go the arms and armour, together with the charger and its equipment.

"In the more fiercer contest of the thirteen good knights on each side, they shall fight with pointed lance and with the sword until his Majesty doth see good to cause the contest to be stopped. Then will his Majesty decide which is the winner in the contest. And to the victors shall go the spoils, the same as in the single contests.

"God save King Richard!"

"God save King Richard!" replied the other heralds.

"God save King Richard!" cried the people, as though they meant the words they said.

"God save King Richard!" echoed the city's walls.

Then the herald at the southern extremity of the lists sang forth the same long-winded recitation in the self same monotone, that added nothing to the clearness of the rules, which might have been said in two score of words.

When the third had followed the example of his fellows they all three withdrew from the lists, and the marshals of the field rode forth from where they had been waiting, drawn up in line, armoured and armed as though for a day of battle, and took their posts in groups at the four corners of the field, ready to do their duty.

My horse, fully caparisoned and impatient, like his master, for the field, my groom now led to where I stood, by Harleston's side, before my tent. Hastily mounting I rode down to the barrier gate that gave entry to the lists.

My friend overtook me as I reached the gate. He was mounted upon a splendid charger of a chestnut hue, as I could see from the only visible part of the animal, namely, his legs. Frederick sat his saddle like an armoured statue. Verily, my children, and without conceit I say it, to a spectator we looked as though but few upon that field would have the courage to touch either shield with any other than a pointless lance.

Much then was my surprise when the gate at the end further from where we waited, with im-

patient plumes and restless pennants, was, for some reason unknown to all of us knights which waited at the North, flung open, whilst ours remained closed. At this opening in dashed a knight which, when he came sufficient close, I recognized, by his device, to be none other than mine old foe, Catesby. Straight he rode up to where I sat, grinding my teeth together, as silently I cursed my fortune for preventing me from riding forth to meet him, that I might strike his shield with my lance's point—for verily did I believe he came thus soon to foil my purpose by challenging me to fight with pointless weapon. On he came and, to my great surprise and pleasure, struck he my shield with the sharp point of his lance.

Ah! my brave sons, ye all do know the pleasure 'tis when, with ring of shield, ye are informed an enemy hath come to do ye battle.

Now were the separating bars removed, and, as Catesby rode to the far end at a gentle trot, I entered with alacrity the field.

As Catesby passed the centre of the lists he paused for a moment whilst, with much grace, he saluted the King, and then the ladies. His example I followed.

After this came much cheering, and well meant advice, from those which thought they better understood the game at which we were about to play than we ourselves did. Most of these warn-

ings came from old warriors of other days, veterans of our great civil wars.

The trumpets now rang out from their metal throats the signal for the fray. Forward we dashed, like two opposing thunderbolts. The hot wind of the summer's morn whistled past mine ears, and sounded like unto when one by accident doth irritate the canvas of his tent by scraping against it with his scabbard's point, causing it to raise its high-pitched voice in protest against the affront. The space betwixt us closed up as quickly as when one with haste doth shut the covers of a book. A crash! a benumbing twinge from finger's tips to shoulder;—a blow, as from a hammer, on the shield;—the steeds stand up and paw the air madly, as does a man when struggling in the waters;—my helm's plumes do bend before mine eyes;—and when the particles of sand are borne aside by the gentle broom of Nature I hold in my gauntlet's grasp only a cloth yard's length of shivered spear. As, with a pat upon my good steed's neck, I brought him to his fore feet, Catesby, whose lance had met a fate similar to mine own, with brandished sword now dashed afresh upon me. His lighter weight had enabled him to regain control of his steed ere I had mastered mine. No time was there for thought. As he leaped forward I flung with my full force, straight at his iron head, the remnant of my lance. His horse, affrighted at this strange weapon,

swung from its course to avoid it, and thus saved his master from the blow. This gave me the respite I wanted, and of which I took advantage by drawing mine own good sword.

Loud cheered the crowd of spectators when they saw how equal had been the tilt; and louder again did they shout when they saw us, with clamorous blows, hotly engaged in sword play. One voice, clear and distinct above all others did I hear, and pleased was I when I heard its rich full ring, as its possessor used to their utmost strength his mighty lungs. It was Michael.

I drove my spurs into my horse's flanks and bounded at mine antagonist with the speed of lightning. He avoided my rush in time to save himself; but my steed, with his shoulders, struck his in the hind quarters, and almost bore mine opponent to the earth. As I passed him in my career I struck at him a backhand blow; but he caught it, with great dexterity, upon his shield.

Again did the applause burst forth with all its discordant notes.

Wheeling quickly around I again rode at him, with my sword swung far behind my shoulder, determined to beat him from his saddle. I stood up in my stirrups, and with the full force of my sword arm I drove a blow fairly at his plumaged head. He caught it right manfully upon his shield; but the blow was so powerful that he might as well have held up a frail piece of wood.

The keen edge of my sword broke through the buckler's curving surface and forced the wounded steel protector, and its supporting arm, with stunning force against their master's head. He reeled slightly in his saddle; and, ere he could regain control of his scattered senses, again did my remorseless blade fall on his helmet crest, with the sound like the driving of an iron spike between a stone wall's members, by means of a heavy hammer. His horse sprang forward with its master's senseless body crushed down upon the saddle. Then the steed swerved from its straight course, and Catesby lurched and fell headlong, like an armoured scare-crow, all joints and not a bone, into the dusty lists.

The King signed to the heralds, and the trumpets warned the marshals to stop the fight; for in my passion I rode to where mine enemy lay, and, truly, I would have given him his quietus but for the marshal's interference. They bore him to his tent, and I saw no more of him that day. He was not killed however, and this did greatly disappoint me.

Sharply I spurred my steed till he sprang forward and upward like the carrier of Valkyrie. Amid the acclamations of the spectators who, as they ever do, waved their scarfs and bonnets like creatures dispossessed of reason I dashed up before the King's seat and, pulling suddenly upon the rein, caused my good steed to paw the air with

his fore feet whilst, with a low bow and a wave of my faithful sword, I respectfully saluted the Usurper.

He acknowledged my salute; but methought the smile that he did wear had, lurking behind it somewhere, a sentiment that, to say the least, was not favourable to me.

After saluting mine enthusiastic admirers (which would bestow the same attentions upon another knight were he to ride out and slay me in the next tilt) I galloped back to the northern barrier. Here my dear friend Frederick did warmly shake me by the hand, whilst Michael went almost mad with delight. So loud, and sometimes profane, were his remarks about Catesby's defeat that I unwillingly was compelled to keep him in some check.

Two other knights now took the field and fought with pointless weapons. This was but a not interesting combat; as the challenger was, in the first course run, thrown from his saddle with a considerable force, after having shown his miserable command of his weapon by altogether missing his opponent; his lance passing harmlessly past his adversary's right shoulder. For this exhibition of the lack of all skill he was prohibited from taking any further part in the tournament, and his name was stricken from the list.

Some three or four other pairs of lances were shivered, and then Harleston gave an exhibition

of the most skilled and perfectest way of unhorsing a knight that ever I had, before that day, seen. He entered the lists and rode, with stately ease and graceful respect, past the ladies and the King, until he reached the spot where Sir Thomas Falstone was sitting his horse in a listless fashion, as though he felt assured that no one there would dare to touch his shield. For Sir Thomas was considered one of the first, if not the very first, lance in England at that time; he having been chosen to represent the late King Edward in the last tournament given by that indolent Sovereign. My friend, with a courtly inclination of his head, struck the shield of Sir Thomas a gentle blow with the blunt end of his spear, and then did he rein back his steed that he might return to receive his pointless weapon.

"Tarry an instant, Sir Knight," called out Sir Thomas.

"I await thy speech," replied Frederick.

"Hast thou grown tired of sitting on yon saddle, that thou dost wish to be removed from off its irritating back? Be assured, young sir, 'twere more gentle, far, wert thou to have thy squire remove thee."

"Thou dost mistake my purpose," replied my friend; "I come but to awaken thee from thy dreams of past conquests; which are but poor weapons with which to fight fresh battles, unless other arms be brought to their assistance."

At this rebuff to the over-confident knight the King laughed both long and loud, and of course the courtiers which surrounded him followed his example.

"By the light of Heaven, thou shalt pay dearly for thine insolence when I do hurl thee from thy saddle as a stone goeth from its sling!" called out the enraged Sir Thomas, as my friend rode at a gentle walk in the direction of the northern end.

When he heard this Harleston turned hastily around, and rode back to Sir Thomas and said:—

"As thou still dreamest, methinks 'twere better to arouse thee with the point," and he did strike the surprised knight's shield with the armed end of his lance, and caused it to ring out right lustily.

"Ah! that is better," laughed Sir Thomas. "Now I may have the pleasure of spitting thee like a rotten apple and then hurling thee from my lance's point."

"Verily thou speakest from experience," returned Sir Frederick; "thou hast, no doubt, been in the habit of spitting rotten apples, and nothing more dangerous; else where didst thou get leisure to grow yon ponderous paunch, next to thy speech, the most formidable part of thee?" And amid a roar of applause and laughter he rode back to where I waited. Here he handed to his squire the lance he carried, and in its place he chose another, very heavy and unwieldy, as I thought;

but to balance these defects it did have a much greater strength than the one with which he had challenged.

The two knights now took their places, and the trumpets again rang out the signal for the contest.

Both horses dashed forward as though they had been connected, in some invisible way, with the voice of the trumpets.

Sir Thomas aimed straight at Harleston's visor; evidently for the double purpose of exhibiting his skill and administering a severe blow to his opponent.

Sir Frederick, to my great surprise, seemed aiming more at his adversary's horse than at the rider. I could not believe that he did intend committing such a breach of the rules of chivalry; and yet it was clear his point was not directed to the rider.

A heavy blow;—a clatter;—and a cloud of dust, and my friend rides bravely on, waving on high a lance without a point; and here, racing madly towards the northern end, doth come Sir Thomas's steed, without its rider or its saddle.

Harleston had, at the last moment, swung his head to the one side, avoiding the other's point; thus he had escaped unharmed.

But how did Sir Thomas's horse come to be without a saddle as well as riderless?

It happened thus, as my friend told me, when, amidst great cheering, he rode back to where I

sat waving my lance and cheering with the others. He had aimed, not at his adversary's horse, as had appeared, but at that part of his saddle where the lance doth lie in rest. This mark he did hit fairly, and the fury of the onset, aided by the heavy spear, caused his opponent's saddle girths to break; and thus Sir Thomas was ignominiously unhorsed, and his gay trappings heaped upon him.

It was a dangerous game to play; for had Harleston so much as scratched, with his lance, his adversary's steed, he had then been disgraced.

Harleston was satisfied with the punishment he had administered in return for the other's boasting, and did not further molest the fallen knight. And indeed there had been but little honour in pressing his victory to a completer stage; for 'twas with great difficulty that Sir Thomas's grooms were able to lift up their bulky master and assist him from the field.

I now rode forth again, and, stopping in the centre of the lists, I opened my visor and, standing up in my stirrups, I called out at the full power of my speech:—

"Know, all true knights here assembled to take part in this noble joust, that I, Walter Bradley, hereby challenge any true knight among ye, which doth desire so to do, to break a lance, with or without a point, as the aforesaid knight doth desire."

For the space of whilst one might tell an hundred no one appeared. At the end of this time, however, a knight, as though in haste, dashed into the lists and, riding with the ease of an accomplished horseman, advanced rapidly to where I waited. He gently touched my shield with the butt of his lance.

On his shield was no device; but his rich inlaid armour, and the courtly bearing of its wearer, seemed to mine eyes as though this were not the first time they had beheld this unknown champion.

As we passed each other in turning, the stranger, in a hurried voice, whose accent told me he was no Englishman, said:—

"I have a message for thee, Sir Walter. May I see thee in thy tent?" There was no time for more.

"Yes," I answered, in the same low tone.

As I rode back to take up my position for the tilt my mind kept tormenting me in its desire to recall where and when I had before heard that voice. The attempt was useless; so placing my lance in rest I made ready for the trumpet's signal.

Loud did they blow.

A rushing rattle, followed by a clattering, tearing sound, and both spears burst into a thousand slivers, as though some foul fiend had been confined within the shaft of each, and at the instant

of encounter they spread apart their arms and threw their frail wooden prisons from them with the contempt that Sampson had for cords.

Neither had an advantage. Both his horse and mine own were forced back on their haunches; but we both kept our seats full firm.

And thus in succession did we break three pairs of lances' without either being able to unhorse, or gain any perceptible advantage over the other. Therefore our contest was declared to be a fair and equal one, without a victor.

After this the heralds again rode into the lists and announced that no more single contests should be permitted; but that the contest of the six and twenty knights should be the next feature of that day's list of exhibitions of knightly feats of arms.

However, preceding this there was now to be an exhibition of skilful archery and sword play, by the yeomanry of England, and the men-at-arms.

When this announcement was made the majority of the knights withdrew them to their tents, as they had no interest in these contests.

Soon after my friend and I had dismounted and entered our tent the knight with whom I had last contended, and which had so strangely spoken with me in the lists, came to where Michael stood before the door and enquired of him if his master were within.

Hearing his voice I went to the door and invited him to enter.

"Ah! Monsieur, I hope that I intrude not," said he, as he saw Harleston with me.

"Nay, be assured Sir Knight, whose name I have not the honour of knowing, that any message that thou art pleased to give me shall be common to my friend, Sir Frederick Harleston, and me."

"Then everything is well. I may then speak out boldly and inform you, gentlemen, what is my true name: and I now do tell ye that it is to but few here that it is known. My name then is Count Louis de Saint-Esteve, though in England, upon my present mission, I am known as Sir Gil de Trailles."

We expressed our pleasure at the acquaintance and asked him to be seated. I then ordered Michael to close the flap of the tent, and to himself remain outside, to see that no one should overhear our conversation; for I could see by the stranger's manner that what he had to say was most secret.

After a silence of a few moments he said, in an almost whisper:—

"My business in England upon the present occasion is on the Earl of Richmond's account. Her Majesty, the ex-Queen of the Royal Edward, hath informed me that both of you gentlemen are in her confidence. I therefore speak thus freely of the Earl's plans. In a short time he shall land

in England. The usurping King Richard shall be given to understand that the landing shall be made upon the eastern coast. On the contrary, the noble Earl shall land in Wales, where he hath many followers. Buckingham, Lord Stanley, and his brother are the most powerful of the Earl's friends. However, Lord Stanley is not to declare in favour of the noble Richmond until the day of battle; when the Usurper's forces shall melt away as doth the snow in Spring. An usurping tyrant cannot prosper; and what should be black treachery, in another case, in this is but God's retribution."

"But how long shall it be ere the Earl of Richmond doth land?" asked Harleston.

"So soon as the Duke of Buckingham rebels in Wales," replied the Frenchman. "Any day," he continued, "ye may expect to hear that this latter hath happened. Watch then and be prepared; for deliverance is near at hand.

"But now I come to that part of my mission that most affects thee, Sir Walter. The ex-Queen, this morning as I was leaving the Sanctuary, commissioned me to acquaint thee with a plot to ruin thee most thoroughly.

"Thine enemy, that one which doth play the dog for Richard, hath informed his master of the part that he doth suspect that thou didst play at Stony Stratford. Before he came to such a position of influence with the Usurper he feared to so

inform on thee. But now that he doth practically rule England he hath planned for thy destruction. His object in so doing is no doubt better known to thee than it is to me. 'Twas Lord Stanley who informed the ex-Queen, and he had it from Richard himself, who now doth trust Stanley as though he had ever loved him."

." I thank thee much for thy kindness in thus warning me of the danger that doth threaten," I replied; " but I scarce see what better I can do than remain still at court, until Earl Henry doth arrive in England. The time, you say, is short; therefore Catesby shall not have long in which to work his vengeance.

" The Usurper cannot molest me unless he doth have more reason for so doing than Catesby's mere suspicion."

" Did the young and rightful King have fair trial, and was he convicted of rank treachery to the state?" asked Harleston. Then my friend answered his own question with a definite " No." This was ever his most forcible way of driving home his opinions.

'Twas useless for me to try to deceive myself in regard to the danger threatening me. I ever have considered a man to be but little removed from a fool when he doth despise his enemies. I therefore admitted that my friend was right, and asked for his advice.

" Methinks it were best for thee to betake thee

"Ha, thou blood varmint."—*Page 257.*

from the court, with all expediency, and journey in the direction of the coast of Wales, in order that thou mayest be ready there to join the Earl of Richmond when he lands," said Frederick, after a brief consideration. "I may remain at court until the last moment, and then follow thine example."

"Thou knowest," said I, "that what thou dost propose is not within the bounds of possibility. How may I leave the Palace, and risk the danger of the Lady Hazel falling into that scoundrel's hands. He desires to be rid of me but that he may have her in his power. Were I to fly his purpose should then be accomplished as well as if my head had fallen on the block. No," I said, with full determination, "here must I remain and risk my fate; there is no other way."

"Why not take the lady with thee, Monsieur?"

"The danger should be too great," I replied.

"Then, gentlemen, I can be of no further assistance," said the Count, as he arose to depart.

"Tarry a moment, Sir Knight," said Harleston; "a glass of wine before thou goest."

"With all my heart," replied the other. And now for the first time since he had entered the tent he opened his visor.

"By Heaven and all its Saints!" cried Harleston; "I felt assured that I had seen yon suit of armour ere this day. Yes," he continued, "the last time I had the honour of meeting thee

was on the field of battle; when we took Berwick from the Scots."

"And art thou the knight which did so kindly cut my helm's lace, after hurling me from my steed?"

"The same," laughed my friend; "and thou dost owe Sir Walter and me each a good sword in payment for those that thou didst break that day."

"When I did come to my senses," said the Frenchman, "I thanked Heaven that I had fallen before a gentleman."

Here we each grasped the Frenchman's hands, and we all laughed and were three good friends.

And thus we sat over our wine and talked, until the trumpets of the heralds warned us that it was time to draw for the contest of the six and twenty knights. Mounting our horses we rode to the southern extremity of the lists, where the draughting was to take place.

CHAPTER XXII

A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE

TIRED were we when at length night came and the first day of the great tournament was ended. 'Twas five of the clock when King Richard threw down his truncheon, and thus put an end, until the morrow, to the jousts.

My total injuries for the whole long day were a few dints in my shield and armour, and the loss of my fine plumes, which had been shorn off with a sword blow from behind, whilst I was engaged with another knight, in the battle of the six and twenty, which had been declared an even contest; though verily do I think our side had a slight advantage; for when, at last, the contest was stopped, on account of the great blood-shed caused, we still had five knights mounted, whilst our opponents had but four. True our leader had been placed *hors de combat,* but methinks this was more than compensated for by there being one more in the saddle on our side. However, it may have been more fair to both parties to have the decision as it was, though for my own part I had preferred to have the battle fought to a definite conclusion. Then again, the Usurper lost

not any supporters by stopping the contest before either side had any decided advantage.

We had been in our tent for some time previous to the conclusion of the day's events, the last of which was more archery.

Michael, after assisting me in the removal of mine armour, asked, in that fashion that ever made it impossible for me to refuse his request:—

"Sure, yer honour, may Oi agin crave yer honour's pardon fer axin' ye, sor, to be absent a short toime, whoilst Oi agin look after thim ould ladies yonder. Sure ye know, sor, Oi'd not be botherin' loike, if Oi wasn't so bound by moy falein's to look after thim in the crowd."

"Yes, Michael, thou mayest go; but tarry not after thou hast taken them safely from the field."

"Uh! sure, sor, Oi fale loike a thafe fer so botherin' yer honour with ivir wantin' somethin'. Thank ye sor. Oi'll be back the minute that Oi takes thim out o' danger," and with a respectful salute he vanished.

We were at our supper when Michael returned, completely out of breath, as though he had travelled far at no slow pace.

"What in the devil's name hast thou been doing unto thyself?" I asked in surprise.

"Runnin', sor," he gasped.

"Short and definite, as well as evident," said I. "But for why didst thou come in such haste?"

"Uh! sure, yer honour, as Oi was returnin',

after takin' the ould ladies to a place o' safety, and as Oi came in soight o' yer honour's tint, uh! sure if Oi didn't behould a damned varmint o' a raven a floyin' in circles ouver this viry tint. Sure, sor, it's an ill day fer poor Moichael when Oi have the misfortune to have to till moy master o' sich bad luck," and he wrung his enormous hands in pure agony of spirit.

"Nay, my faithful friend, feel thankful rather that thou wert permitted to see, and thus inform me of the ill-omened bird's presence, in which the Royal Arthur now flies on wings of Hell's own darkness o'er this fair land, employed as he is in the worthy mission of warning those which danger threatens, and thus giving them some time to be employed in guarding against the trouble."

"But did it alight upon the tent, or merely circle overhead?" asked Harleston.

"Nay, sor; it was about to aloight, and had its avil bake agap to utter some foul curse whin, at moy full spade, Oi rushed, with wavin' o' moy arms in its doirection.

"I thank thee truly, Michael, for thy timely aid; for since it alighted not, the danger is less great."

"True then was what the Frenchman told us of thy danger," said my friend, speaking most serious. "Come, think again, Walter, and resolve to leave the court at once. The Lady Hazel shall be protected from thine enemy so long as Fred-

erick Harleston hath a sword to swing in her defense. Besides this," he added, "I can contrive to have her leave the Sanctuary in safety, and go to thee, when thou hast found some fit abode for both. Thou canst not here avoid the danger that doth threaten thee; and if thou dost fall a victim to Catesby's vengeance, bethink thee of the fate that shall then be her's. Let thy love for thy promised wife o'er-rule thy pride, and resort to flight, where it is to thy profit."

"Ah! my friend, it is a bitter draught to swallow, my flying from mine enemy."

"Yes, Walter; but remember that one might better fight a giant, which is armoured cap-à-pie, holding in his hand a sword of ponderous weight, with edge as sharp as is thy razors, than match thy strength against a child, which holds in its puny grasp the seal of power."

I could not help but admit the truthfulness of this statement; but still I did not relish the idea of fleeing like a hunted animal. I therefore replied:—

"Well, Frederick, I promise thee to consider and debate within my mind on what thou hast said. In the morning I will tell thee which hath conquered, my pride or better reason."

So, wearily throwing ourselves upon the cloaks stretched on the ground, we soon thought not of danger.

"Ha! thou bloody varmint! Mither-o'-Gawd! ye murtherin' baste!"—A scuffle, "Thou wouldst scratch? Thare, damn ye, take that!"—A heavy blow that sounded like unto when one doth strike, with his clenched fist, his armoured thigh,—a heavy, clattering fall,—more swearing from Michael.

These were the confusing and unusual sounds that caused me to awaken with a start, and in my half dazed state to grasp my sword and shield, as though by instinct.

"Anither mouve out o' ye and ye'll have moure than a browken arm to carry to Hill along with yer bloody soul, if thou hast wan, thou damned, snakein' dawg," again growled Michael, as he stood and shook his enormous fist over a prostrate form, lying betwixt the door and me, from which came groans of agony.

"What is it, Michael?" asked Harleston and I, both in the same words, as we sprang to our feet and stood before the enraged squire.

"Sure, yer honours, its some koind o' baste that useth a dagger with too great a fradom.

"Loy quoite, ye spalpeen, or Oi'll tramp the dawg's loife out o' ye with the hale o' moy boot!"

"Open still further the flap of the tent," I commanded Michael. Then, speaking to the prostrate form upon the ground, I said:—

"Arise sirrah, and tell us truthfully what is thy name, and what thy business here at this unseemly hour."

He slowly rose. Then, as Michael opened wider the tent door, the bright moon's rays fell on the shining blade of a dagger lying at my feet.

"What means this dagger, sirrah?" and I stooped to pick it up.

"Hold! Beware there, Michael!" cried Harleston, as he dashed after the stranger, which had taken advantage of my stooping, to attempt to make good his escape.

Michael, who was outside of the tent, making fast the flap, sprang after the fugitive with the speed of a horse. Almost he had the knave by the collar when, as fortune would have it, his foot caught upon one of the cords which served in securing the tent from being blown to the ground, and fell headlong upon his face, with as great a noise as that made by a falling tree. Harleston, at the same instant, dashed at full speed from the tent and, tripping on the fallen Michael, fell with his full weight upon my squire, thereby adding nothing to that angry person's comfort.

"Uh!" said Michael, "this is that damned raven's work. 'Tis useless; the varmint must escape; all Hill is with him."

I heard no more; but, leaving Harleston and Michael to regain their feet, I hastened in pursuit

of the owner of the dagger. He was at that moment disappearing among the scores of tents with which this part of the field was filled. I pursued him until I realized how impossible it was to here find anyone desirous of escaping capture, and then giving up the attempt I returned to my own tent.

Michael was still swearing, and cursing the raven for the luck that it had brought unto us.

"Hill! Whoy didn't Oi brake the varmint's skull, instid o' his arm? Thin the charm had bin browken. Now Gawd knows what'll be the nixt to curse us."

"Come, Michael," said Frederick, "no one is to blame for his escape. Thou didst do right nobly in the saving of our lives from being taken by the dagger of an assassin."

"But tell us," said I, "how thou didst learn of his presence here, and what he was doing when thou didst attack him."

"Will, sor, it was loike this:—Oi was awakened by some wan astippin' ouver moy chist, as though he feared to disturb me. At first, sor, Oi thought it must be ather thee or Sor Fridrick. Thin, thinks Oi to moysilf, what in the divil's name doth make Sor Walter or Sor Fridrick walk so cautious loike? He jist takes a stip in the doiriction o' thee, sor, and thin he stops and waits, whoilst wan moight count a score, as though he was alistenin' fer somethin'. 'Tis moighty strange that ather wan o' yer hon-

ours would go on loike that in yer own tint, sez Oi, to moysilf. This koind o' made me curious loike, so Oi jist sits up and watches him. Thin, Mither-o'-Gawd, sor! the blissid moon shines on a dagger in the varmint's hand. Thin, sor, Oi pounces upon him, and the varmint troid to stab me with his damned dagger. This made me lose moy timper, loike; so Oi jist gives him a rap on the arm, and sure, sor, the thing snapped loike a rotten branch astickin' from out the soide o' a dead tree. Thin, sor, Oi lays him down, akoind o' rough loike, and he thought he'd bitter stay thare. Jist at that toime yer honours wakened up, and ye know the rist as will, or bitter, than Oi do."

"Ah! Michael, my faithful friend, what should I do without thee? Thou hast saved my life, this night, and repaying that is beyond my power; unless thou art ever threatened, when I would save thee and risk mine own life, as thou hast done for me."

"Uh! sure, yer honour, dount talk loike that; Oi have no moure than done moy dooty. Sure its ashamed o' moysilf Oi should be if Oi didn't crush a snakein' varmint loike that, whin he comes acrawlin' into moy master's tint, and roight ouver me, as though I wasn't thare to guard the door."

I could not help but laugh at the easy way in which Michael turned all the credit from himself. I grasped his hand, and slapped him on his huge

shoulder. 'Twas useless to say anything more; and indeed my heart took all my speech away.

For this Michael seemed thankful. He betook himself to his position, across the opening of the tent, and, stretching himself at his ease, he soon forgot the part he had played in that night's almost tragedy.

However, Frederick and I sat up and conversed in low tones for some time after Michael had entered that happy land of oblivion, where troubles or plots—except sometimes those that have no reality—intrude not.

"Was it Catesby, thinkest thou?" asked Harleston. "The person was about his stature; and he spoke not even when his arm was broken; a circumstance that points to his fear of his voice being known unto us."

"Verily it was Catesby," I replied. "What other man is there upon this field would attempt such an act? Besides, he alone hath an interest in my death.

"Ah! Catesby," said I, betwixt my clenched teeth, "some day we shall meet again, where there shall be no rules of tourney to put a stop to my revenge.

"Tell me, Frederick, why it is that such scoundrels are permitted to have such positions of authority? Why doth the Ruler of Heaven and Earth permit it? Tell me, for I feign would know."

"My dear Walter," he replied, in that gentle, reasoning way, "thou dost not observe the laws of nature, or thou shouldst not have asked that question.

"The brightest flowers in the stagnant pond of life do rise to the surface with their worthy blooms."

"Surely thou dost not put Richard and Catesby in that class?"

"Nay, nay," he replied, "do but let me finish.

"True, the flowers do come unto the surface," he continued; "but ever remember, Walter, that they must first make their way through the green and evil-smelling scum that also floats on top. The beauteous blossom is made stronger and more large by reason of its stinking opposition. Such is life in all its forms, and such shall it ever be.

"But come," said he, changing from his philosophical to his practical style of conversation, "does not this night's work make clear to thee thy danger? Surely thou wilt not longer hesitate?"

"Verily, I have decided," I replied.

"That is the part of wisdom."

"Do but wait until I have finished; as thou but now saidst to me."

"I do," he smiled.

"Yes, Harleston, I am fully resolved,—to fly not."

"What?"

"Before this incident of the night did happen 'tis possible I might have decided to follow thine advice, the which is no doubt the properest and most reasonable course. But sith Master Catesby hath attempted to play the part of an assassin I am determined to remain and show to his coward's face that Walter Bradley fears him not. Let him do his worst. In London I remain until the Earl of Richmond lands."

"Oh, Bradley, Bradley, that hot head of thine will never be content until it has been severed from its trunk. And yet," he continued thoughtfully, "thou hast most excellent reason, if it were not for thine accursed temper. Well, well, I know that it is now useless to attempt to change thee. The next best thing to do is to try and save thee, after thou art in his power. 'Tis a difficult task; but it's all that your friends can do for thee."

"What dost thou think his next move will be?"

"He will not use the dagger, after to-night's failure," replied Frederick; "and besides, he hath a broken arm if it were he which visited us."

"Thou meanest that his next attempt will be the axe of the executioner?"

"Yes."

"A pleasant prospect; but one that the loss of sleep cannot save from." So saying I stretched me upon my cloak and soon thought naught of Catesby nor his vengeance.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ARREST

LOUD and trembling blew the trumpets to arouse the lazy sleepers and warn them that the second and last day of the grand tournament had dawned. Then, had one but had the heads of Ægeon, and had he been able to place heads in separate parts of the field, among the tents of knights and squires, his numerous ears had heard low-muttered curses issue from each tent, as the inmates awakened, protested, turned to the other side, shrugged up their each particular pair of shoulders and again sank into sleep.

Another hour passed, and again rang out the trumpets, with their unwelcome sound. This time they must not be denied, as the sun was well started on his circling journey.

Michael was busy superintending the preparing of our morning meal.

Harleston, as ever, did not rise until the last moment; and then he hurriedly arose and joined me at breakfast.

"Well, Michael," said Frederick, "whom dost thou think it was last night, that thou didst han-

dle so roughly? Thinkst thou that it was Catesby?"

"Sure, sor, Oi know not fer a surety, but methinks it must ha' bin anither."

"And why?"

"Because, sor, he seemed to lack the stringth that Catesby doth possiss."

"Methinks that it had been all one to thee had he been possessed of twice the power of Catesby. I doubt me much that thou had noticed any difference," laughed Frederick.

At this compliment to his strength Michael blushed like a maiden, and returned no answer.

"Come, Walter, what wilt thou wager that the would-be assassin of last night was or was not Catesby?" asked my friend.

"Truly, my wish is so strong that it was mine old enemy that I will make it father of the thought, and for the wager,—say—a new cloak, of Paris's latest fashion."

"Done, by Heaven! That cloak will suit me well. I'll lay on Michael's judgment."

When we were fully armed we strolled forth from our tent to watch the spectators arrive in one continuous stream, like a sluggish, winding river, and well nigh as unceasing.

Michael again did ask permission to be absent for a little while, that he might escort the old ladies unto their seats, and protect them in the enormous crowd. In a short time we saw his head

moving towards the rows of seats, as he brushed aside, as though they had been reeds, the groups of angry tradesmen, that he might make way for those which he did escort.

"What friends of Michael's are those same old ladies, to which he showeth such faithful attention and care?" asked Frederick.

"Thou knowest them as well as I."

"Nay, but hast thou never asked him?"

"No; I thought it of but little moment until now. But methinks that I have seen those same figures somewhere ere this; though where, I cannot now recall," said I, as Michael and his charge appeared from out the crowd. "I will ask Michael when he returns."

But ere my squire did return the heralds rode into the lists, and started their tedious recitation of the rules of that day's sports; the which we were so absorbed in listening to, in the effort to gather some small particle of sense from, that I thought not of that which I had intended asking Michael.

The marshals then entered the field, and took up their customary positions to enforce the rules of the joust; the which were, as near as I could make out, not different from the first day's.

"There, Walter, I have won my wager; for, if mine eyes do serve me aright, thine ancient foe, Catesby, hath taken his place among the King's guards."

"Thou art right; the cloak is thine. But see! he wears not his armour, although his both arms appear to be whole and sound."

"True, your treatment of him yesterday hath been sufficient to satisfy his appetite for glory and revenge, such as he obtained in the lists."

Then, as mine enemy turned his head, Michael, who was now standing behind me, exclaimed, in a voice low but heavy, like the roll of distant thunder:—"The damned villain's head is cracked; fer look at the clout that shows beneath his cap. Sure its bad luck that the blow that did it stopped ere it rached the varmint's chin."

* * * * * *

That evening, as we journeyed slowly and wearily back from the field that had been during the last two days the scene of so many noble feats of arms, and of which nothing now remained but the long and narrow strip of sandy ground where the sod had been removed to leave a level and firm place for the list, and the black spots to point out the places where had glowed the fires, Harleston remarked in his low and musing voice:—

"Verily, yon place doth represent the lives of men."

"How so?" I asked.

"Records of our deeds are imprinted in the sand. If a storm doth arise to-night, all the little mounds that indicate some noble courses run shall

be levelled, and a traveller passing there to-morrow will notice nothing but a barren strip, with nowhere on its face a mark to tell of glorious deeds performed."

The thought of this was sad, and yet 'twas true; as are the most of gloomy thoughts. It is for this same reason that I ever try to turn my mind's eye to the pleasures and the joys of life, the which are far from few. I therefore, on this occasion, turned from the contemplation of this dreary sight to the scene that should await me when, that evening, I would go unto the Sanctuary; for such was mine intent. I could picture, in my mind's eye, my fair Hazel waiting and watching with the agony of expectation for me; wondering if I ever should return from that sport which she so much disliked on account of its "inhumanity," as she had said.

I wondered if Harleston's mind were not drawing the same picture. Had he yet asked Mary to be his wife? I believed he had; for the day before we rode forth to the tournament, when we had visited the girls, Hazel had let drop a remark that did arouse my suspicions; and when I questioned her upon the point she laughingly informed me of the fact that I was "too inquisitive," the which I doubt not. And try as I would I could get nothing more from her. I had not liked to ask Harleston; for there seems to be a something, the name of which I know not, that ever doth keep

us from mentioning this subject to one which we believe to be in love, unless they first do bring it up.

By this time we had almost reached the Palace of King Richard.

Loud cheered the people as the King rode along the crowd-lined streets and scattered gold among them with a lavish hand.

"God save King Richard!" rang out on every side.

I had as soon cried:—"God save the devil!"

The broken-headed Catesby rode beside the King. The two seemed to be conversing as we reached Crosby Place.

"Not favourable to me," said I in Harleston's ear, as I nodded in the direction of the hump-backed King and his adviser.

My friend did not reply, in words; but he shook his head in a manner which showed that he realized my danger fully.

After giving our horses to our grooms we entered the great hall, and from there—when the King had withdrawn himself—we went to mine own room.

How gloomy and lonely did it seem. Something huge, black and terrible did seem to vanish from the centre of the room, dividing into a score of parts, and each part retaining, for an instant only, a pair of fiery eyes, as the light of our lamp burst into the room, dispelling all the darkness.

Now, on this night my room seemed not the same. Ever did I expect to see some spirit of evil arise before mine eyes and stretch out its fantastic arms to seize me. A great gloom had fallen on us both. Neither spoke for some time; and when at length I said to Harleston:—

"No longer can I bear this life; to-morrow I leave this Palace forever," mine own voice did seem to startle me; so hollow and unnatural did it sound.

Then, as if the words I had said were to be turned into a prophecy, a knock came at the door, and, upon opening, in walked Sir James Tyrrell and a half a score of men-at-arms.

"I regret, Sir Walter Bradley, that I am compelled to ask you for your sword, and to tell thee that I now arrest thee."

"Upon what charge?"

"High treason, Sir Walter."

Harleston arose and grasped my hand in a grip that could not be mistaken.

"Tell not my dear Hazel of this; that is, not at present."

"Keep up thy courage," he replied; "thou shalt not die by the hand of an executioner. I, thy friend, Harleston, have said it, and I never yet have told a lie."

I thanked him for his kind words with the pressure of my hand, and with a firm step marched from the room.

In the hall I met Michael on his way to my quarters. When he saw me he made a movement as though he thought to attack the soldiers which surrounded me.

"Farewell, Michael," I said, as a great lump arose in my throat, and I gripped his mighty hand. "Go to Sir Frederick, in my room, and in future serve him as faithfully as in the past thou hast served me."

He dropped to one knee and, though I tried to prevent him, he kissed my hand as though I were a King. Then he arose and walked slowly toward the door where Harleston stood.

As I marched on I wiped two drops of moisture from the back of my hand.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN THE TOWER

I WAS conducted into the Tower through the "Traitor's Gate," the which, when I passed through, added nothing unto my lightness of spirit. As I gazed at the enormous arches, the memory of past events when, as a boy, I had heard of those which had entered this waterway with the charge of treason clinging to their names, never again to be heard of by the outside world, came to my mind with a renewed freshness and a force never to be by me forgotten, so long as mine old grey head retains its wonted reason.

But then, this was as nothing compared with the great feeling of loneliness, and crushing weight of the conviction of hopelessness which settled on my heart when the door of my prison had been closed and locked, and I was left alone, but for my tormenting thoughts, within my cruel room in that Tower which rumour told had been the place of murder of our little King.

When the keepers had departed, and the sound of their clanking steps had died out, I still stood in the centre of the room, benumbed and dazed, as the full reality of my situation was gradually ab-

sorbed by my whirling mind. Then I moved, and mine armour rattled with a noise that sounded, to mine ears, as though a shield had fallen from a great height and alighted on a floor of stone. I started, gasped, and my hand flew to the place where should have hung my sword. I felt my brow. It was cold and moist. I laughed at my foolishness; but the sound of mine own voice was so awful that I was as much startled as I had been by the sound of mine armour. Then I stood still and held my breath and listened, for what I know not. The stillness was so intense that it did seem to have a substance, and press into mine ears with such a force as did cause me to think that they were like to burst.

How long I stood thus I know not; it did seem to be an age.

Presently I heard a distant footstep. Ashamed of my childish feeling of fear, I, that would stand alone and face a score of warriors and never quaver, as the sound of the feet approached, started to pace hurriedly the floor of my prison. As the causer of the sounds in the corridor reached my door he stopped, and I heard the key rattle, as he did insert it in the lock. I sat myself down upon my couch and tried, as best I could, to appear to be at mine ease when the jailer should enter.

He brought with him a lamp and a small table, for both of which I was glad.

He was a not-bad-natured, though coarse-look-

ing fellow of about some forty years; of rather more than middle height, and a girth and breadth of shoulder which bespoke not lack of bodily strength. A shock of yellow hair, mixed liberally with grey, stood out from beneath his cap of steel, like a wisp of straw.

After placing the articles that he had brought, upon the floor, he cast but one glance at me, and then turned on his heel and left me. Presently he returned with my supper, which he placed upon the table much in the same manner as one would arrange the meal of swine.

"There, sir," said he, "thou hast nothing to complain of. That supper is fit for a King. And it's better than one King had whilst he lived in this very room."

"What! did the young King Edward occupy this room?"

"As for whether he occupied it or not, now that I know not; but he was kept in this same room until he went out feet first."

"Horrible!" I gasped.

"Horrible? Lord, sir! methinks that thou shouldst feel honoured by the thought of being let sleep in the same room where a royal King did sleep. I know that I would," he added, with a grim smile.

"And dost thou know who killed him?" I asked.

"Nay, nay, I said not nothing of his being

killed," he replied, with a grin and a wise twist of his head, accompanied by the uplifting of the one of his shoulders until it touched his ear.

"Well then, of what distemper did he die?"

"Ha, ha!" he laughed, as though I had amused him vastly. "What distemper? Ha, ha, ha! Well upon my soul! ha, ha, ha!" he burst forth again.

His voice, when he laughed, was ample evidence that he had in his day consumed no small quantity of spirits of different sorts; for it sounded as though a goodly quantity of the liquids had remained in his throat, where it did some prodigious bubbling.

"The distempers that one gets when a prisoner here are most always of one kind. Ha, ha, ha! What distemper? Well upon my soul!" And still laughing at that which he no doubt imagined was wit, he went out and locked the door and I was again alone with my thoughts, which were no more cheerful than they had been previous to his visit.

That night my sleep, if such it may be called, was an almost endless succession of tormenting and extravagant dreams of terror, divided from each other by an awakening start of horror.

And so the weary days and nights of mine imprisonment dragged slowly on. Slowly, for the weight of sorrow and tormenting agony of uncertainty for the fate of the one I loved did im-

pede their progress, as doth the heavy weight upon the poor snail's back cause it to drag its weary body so slowly along its slimy course.

My sole occupation, with which I tried to prevent my mind from brooding, was the reading of the different sad histories of those which writ down their thoughts, and fates to be, upon their —and now my—prison's walls. One of these, whose sadness and beautiful resignation—even though it hath no great poetic merit—most affected me, I now set down. The lines and words are imprinted on the pages of my memory with such a force as never can fade, so long as the old, worn book doth hold together. Here they are, my children; and much profit may be gathered from their calmness and resignation:—

"Somewhat musing, and more mourning,
In remembering the unsteadfastness,
This world being of such wheeling,
Me contrarying, what can I guess?

"I fear, doubtless, remediless,
Is now to seize my woful chance;
For unkindness, withouten less, (lessening)
And no redress, doth me avance.

"With displeasance, to my grievance,
And no surance of remedy;
Lo, in this trance, now in substance,
Such is my dance, willing to die.

"Methinks, truly, bounden am I,
And that greatly, to be content;
Seeing plainly Fortune doth wry
All contrary from mine intent.

"My life was lent me to one intent;
It is nigh spent. Welcome Fortune!
But I ne went (thought) thus to be shent,
But she it meant, such is her won (wont)"*

Evidently the woeful writer of these lines had been condemned to death. His bones had now lost their fleshly mantle, and forgotten he lay, far from those he loved. "How long ere I shall be in the same condition?" thought I, as I stood before my secure-barred window and gazed at the rain, as it fell in one unceasing torrent.

"Verily the heavens do weep for the sufferings of poor England," I said aloud; for now I spoke unto myself as though I were another.

For I know not how many days, for in my sorrow I lost all track of time, the rain fell with unabated fury.

How I longed to hear how fared my gentle Hazel.

"Hell and furies!" would I cry, and grip at the same time the iron bars that stood like the gate of Hell betwixt me and my liberty. How relieving did it feel to my pent up hate to twist at an iron bar and imagine that it was Catesby's throat I held.

"Ha! thou accursed villain!" would I cry aloud, "thou now shalt know the fury of my ven-

*Rous, the historian, states that these lines were written by Lord Rivers, during that unfortunate nobleman's imprisonment at Pomfret. K. M.

geance!" Then would I strike the cruel metal with my bare and clenched fist, with such a force as did drive the tender skin back from the bone and leave a bleeding tear.

The days lengthened into weeks; and still no word from the outside world. No trial; no condemnation; no execution; and that which I then most distasted, no definite knowledge of what should be my fate.

* * * * * *

But let me now imagine myself as a free man, outside the Tower's walls—the which I then saw no chance of my ever being—and let me now describe the strange and important events that there were happening.

The next day after my arrest the Duke of Buckingham left the court, as though in haste. He and Lord Stanley had been together in the apartments of the Duke until a late hour on the night of my arrest. Whisperings there were to the effect that Buckingham had parted from the King in a spirit of animosity. Whether this were or were not the case I know not. However, the next news of Buckingham was of such a kind that it left no room for a doubt as to their then relations, no matter what they had been previous to the Duke's departure.

"Buckingham hath rebelled against King Richard: he is now raising an army in Wales. The

Earl of Richmond is coming to his aid. More war and bloodshed for poor England." Such was the intelligence that now flew on from mouth to ear throughout the land. Had mine imprisoned ears but heard it then, how welcome had it been.

Catesby, who had on several occasions attempted to gain admittance to the Sanctuary, and had as many times met with refusal, was now obliged to attend to the affairs of state. Thus my fair Hazel was saved from his further molestation. Those days of tortuous anxiety to me could have been scarce less agonizing to her.

The Usurper, with that energy ever his chiefest characteristic, now raised an army to face the rebellious Duke.

Then did commence to fall those fearful rains, that never once did cease for days and nights I know not how many; but as I think, some ten days or two weeks.

The army of the Duke, thinking this unceasing rain was a message from Heaven forbidding them to thus rebel, deserted their leader, and each particular man did betake himself unto his separate home.

Then, as every congregation of people must have its Judas, the Duke was betrayed into the hands of the usurping tyrant, and there at Salisbury, where Richard had taken his post—for he thought that Richmond did intend joining Buck-

ingham near this place—the Duke's head fell upon the block, and Richard was rid of one more great enemy.

Still did not Richmond land; so Richard and his army returned to London.

When Catesby, who had been with Richard in this expedition, came again to the Palace it did cause Harleston great anxiety; for he feared for the safety of the Lady Hazel. However, Catesby, to my friend's surprise, went not near the Sanctuary.

This was but the deceiving prologue to another history of suffering and reverses to us, that ever seemed bent on rending us asunder, whose hearts were bound together with such mighty bonds of love.

One evening as Frederick returned from a visit to the Sanctuary—where he had learned that Richmond had at last landed in Wales, and was even now on his way to London—on entering his room Michael handed him a sealed packet which proved to be an order for him to be prepared to march, at sunrise, in the ranks of Richard's army. This, however, was no surprise, as he had been expecting it for more than a week. He walked over to the table and laid the letter upon it.

"What is this, Michael?" he called, as his eyes fell upon another well sealed packet.

Michael, however, knew not from whence it came or how it got there.

"Michael," said Frederick, "thou knowest that I desire no one to be permitted to enter this room during mine absence. How is it, therefore, that this letter found its way here without thy knowledge?"

"Sure, yer honour, it must have bin thare afore ye lift, sor; fer Oi was out o' the room but fer a few minutes, and thin Oi made fast the door behind me, and took the kay along with me, sor. Divil a soul could inter, sor, barrin' that they came through the kay-houle."

"Strange," said Harleston, as he commenced to read the lengthy letter. But stranger still he thought it ere he had finished its contents. It was writ in a labored hand, as though to avoid recognition, and read as follows:—

"To Sir Frederick Harleston, *Greeting.*

"The writer of these words, though—for reasons that he is not at liberty to state—he signs not his name, is well known to thee, and to thine unfortunate friend, Sir Walter Bradley; both of which he loveth well.

"To-morrow Sir Walter is to go through a form of trial—the result of which must be his conviction—and he shall immediately be taken unto Tower Hill, where his head shall be stricken from the trunk. Unless, ere to-morrow's dawn, he, by the aid of his friends, doth contrive to escape from the Tower, and make his way from London to a place of safety, he must surely die.

"Sir Walter is now confined within the square tower next after passing through the Tower of

St. Thomas, which, thou no doubt knowest, is that one into which the "Traitor's Gate" doth lead.

"If thou wilt but turn to the enclosure in this letter thine eyes shall behold an order, signed by his Majesty, King Richard, that shall obtain for the bearer admittance to and exit from any part of the Tower. However, this cannot give unto thee power to take forth a prisoner with thee. That must be done at thine own risk, and in the manner following:—

"There is but one keeper in attendance on Sir Walter. Him thou must master, and in a quiet manner. Take then from his belt the keys that do depend therefrom. Leave the keeper in such a condition as shall secure thee of his quietness. The aforesaid keys will give unto you an exit into the space before the square tower. When ye have reached this, turn to your left, and again will the keys open the gate in this wall with which ye shall soon be confronted. Then, looking to your right, ye shall behold the wall that doth separate the yard from the watery moat. Approach this with the exercise of great caution and ye shall then observe an opening where the wall is now being repaired by workmen, in the day time, and at night it is guarded by a single soldier, armed with a pole-axe. Ye must quiet this man by whatever means best serving. But over and above all else, the neglect of which advice must be the ruin of ye both, permit him to make not any noise; for the utterance of but one word by him shall be the signal for his fellows to come to his assistance; in which case escape is impossible.

"When the sentry shall have been removed the moat must be crossed as best ye can. The water

therein is now both fresh and high, and therefore it will not be difficult for ye to descend into it and swim across. This ye must do in a most careful manner, that the guard be not disturbed by the noise of splashing water.

"At a point directly opposite to the place where the wall is now being repaired ye shall find a ladder made of ropes and cross pieces, placed there for your especial use and privilege.

"By these same means ye may assist your friend to freedom, and that, without great risk; providing that the aforesaid instructions be followed with exactness and care."

Then followed a note. It read thus:—

"If thy friend, Sir Walter, doth desire to save the Lady Hazel Woodville from one which now resides within the walls of this place, and who is as bitter an enemy of Sir Walter as he is ardent lover of the aforesaid lady, he had best tarry in his flight for a sufficient time to allow him to take the lady with him along. However, let him not abide there; but hasten along upon his journey until he cometh unto the second road turning unto his right after leaving Westminster. Let him follow this for the distance of about three miles, and he shall then come unto a house, from the window of which a flag shall hang. The aforesaid house is not occupied, and may be used by the refugees for their hiding-place. Let them there remain all day to-morrow; for the aforesaid enemy of Sir Walter doth intend to take the aforesaid lady from the Sanctuary, by force if necessary, to-morrow, ere he doth leave to join the King's army at Leicester.

"Praying with my heart's full strength that this warning may not be too late to save the gallant knight from the disgraceful death of a traitor to his country, I am, dear and respected sir,

(Signed) "A FRIEND."

"A friend? Now what friend can he be who hath access to my room when the door is locked?" mused Harleston.

"Besides, he must be one in favour to have such an order as is this," and he picked up the enclosed paper and read as follows:—

"Unto the bearer of this order grant admittance to the Tower of London, or to any part thereof. And further, likewise permit the aforesaid bearer to have conference with any prisoner or prisoners within the Tower. And further, permit the aforesaid bearer to have entrance or exit at whatever hour of day or night best conveniencing him.

(Signed) "RICARDUS REX."

My friend stood bent in thought for some time after reading this strange order. Then he raised his head quickly, as though a sudden solution of the problem had occurred to him.

"Can it be possible that this is a plot, laid with great cunning by Catesby, that I may be lured into the Tower, that there I may be kept? But then, this order doth command that the bearer shall also have exit. But it may be that the keep-

ers know to whom it doth belong; and were I to present it they may have orders to arrest me for its theft. That should be a clever plan for removing me from his way. Then he might use force to gain admittance to the Sanctuary." These were the thoughts that now kept running through his mind, causing him great anxiety.

He then read the letter and order to Michael, and then told him of his doubts, and asked him for his opinion.

"Sure, sor," said Michael, "methinks the chances are that it were dangerous for thee, sor, to go thoysilf into that houle o' Hill. But, yer honour, it moight have come from Lord Stanley, and it may be the truth he sez. How'd it be, sor, if Oi moysilf wint in yer honour's place? Sure, Sor Walter must be saved, if Oi lose a scoure o' loives in the doin' o' it. Sure, sor, 'twould matter little if they did chop off moy head; but if thou wert wance shut up in that damned Tower what moight not happen to that swate lady in the Sanctuary?" And Michael's lips closed into a straight line that bespoke no good unto those which attempted to keep him in the Tower.

"'Tis good, Michael, that I follow thine advice; for whilst thou art aiding Sir Walter in his escape, myself will unto the Sanctuary, and there acquaint the Lady Hazel with our plans, and have her in readiness for the flight. Besides," he con-

tinued, "thy presence with Sir Walter will give me assurance that the keeper and the soldier guarding the breach shall make no noise.

"But come, we must make haste; for the night is already far spent, and Sir Walter and his dear lady must have left the Sanctuary by the dawn of day.

"Thou must go well armed, and take with thee a horse for Sir Walter."

"Oi will, sor."

"Do thou make ready the horses, that the grooms may know not who took them from the stable."

"Hadn't Oi bist take with me anither sword for Sor Walter? Thim spalpeens took his own from him, bad luck to thim fer it."

"Yes, Michael; 'twas thoughtful of thee to remember this necessity.

"And now, Michael, for thy directions:—

"Tether your horses in some quiet, and not too light, spot. Then proceed unto the western entrance, and to the officer in charge thereof present this order, being sure, however, to have him return it unto thee. In the same manner, providing that this order be not a trap, shalt thou pass the other gates. Inform these officers that thou dost desire to be taken unto the prison of Sir Walter Bradley, in the square tower. When thou dost see Sir Walter do not appear friendly with him if there be more than the one keeper present, lest it

doth cause them to watch ye too closely. Thou knowest best how to silence the keeper.

"When this is accomplished give the letter unto Sir Walter. He will then know how to follow its directions.

"When ye are once out (if Heaven doth so far favour ye) come with all haste unto the Sanctuary, where the Lady Hazel shall be in readiness."

Whilst Harleston had been thus giving Michael his instructions they both had been arming each other in haste. They were now fully ready; so Michael went to prepare the horses. Frederick then followed Michael to the stables, and in a short time they were ready to set out.

"Do thou go first, Michael, and have a great care that thou dost follow closely the instructions that I gave thee. Pray God that thou dost succeed," and he gripped Michael's giant hand with a force that assured him, had he not already been aware of it, of his sincerity.

"Oi'll remimber, sor, and do as thou hast said. And be sure of this, yer honour; if the order be but a trap, moure than wan man now aloive and will shall see Gawd, or the divil, afore they take Moichael a prisoner." With this he was off, and Harleston stood for some moments gazing after the gigantic monument of honesty as he gradually faded from view and was swallowed up in the darkness. Then he himself mounted and started on his mission.

He had not, however, left the courtyard when he met a horseman, which called out to him as they passed each other:—"'Tis late for thee to be riding forth upon a journey, Sir Frederick. And besides, the road is dark to travel thus, alone." It was Catesby.

"Thanks for thy kindly warning," returned Frederick; "but I have but a short distance to travel, and the way, methinks, is safe." He then rode on; but for a few rods only; for here his horse stopped of its own accord.

As the noise of the horse's hoofs ceased suddenly, Frederick distinctly heard a low laugh come from out of the darkness, and in the direction where last he had seen Catesby.

"I fear Michael shall not return," thought Frederick, as he again proceeded on his way.

CHAPTER XXV

MICHAEL AND I

THE key rattled in the lock, and I heard my jailer's voice:—

"This is the place. Best let me go in first; for he's as ugly as the devil, and may guzzle thee, a stranger, unless I tell him you're coming. Though methinks he'd soon drop thee, when he found the kind of game he had caught."

Then the door opened cautiously, and the straw-like head peeped fearfully around the corner. He had learned this lesson by my almost breaking his head one day when he happened to enter at a moment when my rage knew no bounds, as I thought of my wrongs, and imagined all kinds of fates for Hazel.

"Come in, and fear not, thou fool!" I said, for I liked not to behold such cowardice.

"Ha! thou hadst best keep quiet now; for here's one can master thee, big and all as thou art." And he shook his ring of enormous keys in mockery at me; however, from a safe distance.

I heard a rattle of armour, and, to my great surprise and delight, in walked Michael. I

sprang to my feet and started to rush toward him; but he put his finger to his lip in warning.

The keeper who was busy with the locking of the door, turned in haste as he heard me start to my feet. Then, seeing me halt suddenly, he burst into a loud laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" bubbled from his frog-like throat. "Methinks that thou hast done well to stop and consider ere thou dost spring against a wall of stone. Well, upon my soul, sir, this is now my turn to laugh! Ha, ha, ha! Why dost thou stop? Why dost thou not break his head, as thou didst mine? Ha, ha, ha! Well, upon my—"

The place of the missing word was taken up in a gurgle, different however from his disgusting, coarse laugh. Michael had changed from his statue-like stolidity and, in the twinkling of an eye, the astounded keeper was dangling in the air, held at arm's length by the mighty Irishman, to whom it was no more exertion than it is to a female servant to shake, and then hurl from the door, a mischief-making cat.

"Kape still, ye varmint," growled Michael, as the struggling keeper kicked in every direction, some of his blows striking Michael on the legs.

Out flew the dagger from the keeper's belt, and with it he struck wildly at my squire's arm.

"Ha! thou scratchin' divil; why dost thou not be quoite? 'Twill do thee no good to stroike:

mine arm is armoured. Uh! thou baste," he growled, as the dagger struck his bare hand. "Oi must thin finish thee." And releasing the hand that he had held at the back of the swine-like neck, and still holding the struggling keeper from the floor with the other, he struck him a blow upon the head with his clenched fist. There was a sound like that made by an egg when it is let fall upon a stone. A trembling from head to foot. The knees drew partly up, and then the legs stretched out full length, and stiff, and the keeper which had flung at me his taunts had died by the hand of my Herculean squire.

"Oh! my poor Michael, what hast thou done?" I cried. "Now thy honest life must pay for this."

"Beg pardon, sor, but playze don't spake so loud; some wan may hear us," said he, as he carried the dead jailer by the neck and laid him tenderly upon the bed.

"Oi had not mint to kill thee, thou poor fool; but Sor Fridrick tould me to make thee quoite, and, as thou wouldst scratch, I saw no other way." This to the body.

"But what means all this, Michael?" I asked, when I had done embracing him, (I could have kissed him; so glad was I to again see his honest face) at which he blushed like a maiden.

"Sure, sor, this same mysterious litter 'll till ye all, sor. Sor Fridrick found it on his table

whin he returned to-noight." And then he told me, shortly, all that had happened since mine arrest.

"And hath Richmond yet landed?" I asked eagerly.

"Yis sor, Sor Fridrick tould me that he was now on his way to London. The King laves the city to-morrow, with an army, to take up his place at Leicester, as Oi think."

"Why Leicester?"

"Sor Fridrick said 'twas that he moight be near the cintre o' the country, so that his min can rache him without havin' to march far."

"That is like the tyrant, ever on the alert to take any advantage. A clever man is Richard. Such a King as he might have made, had he not been born a blood-supper."

Then I remembered the letter, and hastily I read it.

"What! is it to assist me to escape from this accursed place that thou hast come?"

"Sure, sor, fer divil a thing ilse."

The idea of such a chance had not even dawned upon my dazed brain. Remember, my dears, I had been for many long days and nights confined within a narrow room within the Tower. Ye cannot understand what that means, unless ye do go yourselves through it, the which pray God ye never may.

"But how?" I asked, as I drew the back of

my hand across my brow in an effort to assist my comprehension. "It surely cannot be possible!"

"Possible or not, sor, we can do no worse than fail. But if what that strange litter sez be true we shan't fail, sor."

Then he told me where Harleston had gone to make all ready, in case we should succeed.

"What thinks Sir Frederick of this same letter?"

"Sure, sor, he knows not what to make out o' it. But sure, yer honour, so far the order hath bin all that we could wish, and if the rist o' what the writer sez be as good as has been the furst, uh! sure we'll have a good swim, and lave this damned place that gives wan the shivers to be on the insoide o'."

"It shall be difficult to swim in our armour."

"Sure it's not far, yer honour."

"Then assist me to make haste, that no time may be lost. But first tie up that scratch upon thy hand."

"Uh! sure, yer honour 'tis nothin'."

However, I bound my scarf about the hand of him I now loved so dearly, and then he assisted me to arm.

We were soon ready to start on this perilous attempt for freedom, that meant so much to me, if I should succeed, and such a calamity unto myself and another which I loved better a thousand times than I did my life, if I should fail.

I then went to the poor corpse upon the bed and detached the chain by which the ring that held his keys was suspended from his belt. I then crossed to the smoky lamp and re-read the letter with great care and attention, that its contents might be fully engraven upon my memory. I then carefully placed it within my gauntlet, and, warning Michael to leave his hands bare, that he might use them freely in quieting the soldier at the breach—in case we ever reached it—I cautiously unlocked the door. Then I opened it for a sufficient space to allow my head an exit, and fearfully I looked both ways along the corridor to make sure that no one was about. The hall was clear. I opened the door wider, and motioning Michael to follow, I stepped, as quietly as mine armour would permit, into the hall. With the quietness of a thief I re-locked the door and started on tip-toe down the passage. I had taken but a few steps, however, when Michael's hand was laid upon mine arm. I started, turned in fear, and then remembering Michael, I blushed in the darkness at my foolish, girl-like action.

"Beg pardon, sor, but dount ye think 'twould be bitter if we was to walk along as though we had the roight and didn't give a damn fer a soul o' thim?" whispered my companion.

"Well thought on, Michael," I returned, and we strode along with the apparent confidence of two keepers. Then Michael started whistling a

gay Irish tune. This was more than my o'er-strained and assumed confidence could bear; so I placed my hand over his mouth and his whistling came to an abrupt end.

Then down the stairs we went until we reached the heavy door opening into the great archway through this tower. Here we paused for a moment whilst I asked Michael concerning the portcullis.

"It was up, sor, whin Oi intered."

"Then all is well. Now be careful, Michael, and watch me for any signal I may give thee; for on thee now depend our chances of success."

Then, with hands trembling with excitement, I at last found the proper key and inserted it in the lock. Then, with apparent carelessness, I flung the door wide open and strode forth, Michael following. At this very moment a soldier, as though on guard, marched with measured step along the arch-topped way. As he heard the door swing open he halted and, turning, watched us in the dim light cast by the flickering torch overhead. To hesitate for but an instant meant failure and certain death. Adopting Michael's plan I whistled softly an air that came by inspiration to my mind, and at the same time closed the door again and locked it with a great show of care. Then taking Michael by the arm I walked leisurely along, swinging the great ring of keys and whistling as I went.

Ah! my children, ye know not how trying was that indifferent walk. How sore was I tempted to break into a run, in a mad effort to leave that awful place behind me. But then, had I done so, I had not lived to see the setting of another sun.

As we passed beneath the great portcullis I glanced back to where we had left the sentry. He was still standing beneath the light and gazing after us. No doubt he wondered who we were; but my apparent confidence and ease of manner re-assured him; for as we turned to our left to pass the round tower which adjoins the one in which I had been confined, he shouldered his pole-axe and resumed his lonely tramp.

"Two difficulties safely past," I whispered. "Now, Michael, have a great care and let not the soldier at the breach make the faintest sound."

"Oi'll do moy bist, sor," and I felt sure he would. Then we came to the short inner wall that runneth from the tower of St. Thomas back unto the square tower that we had just left.

As is ever the case, when one is in great haste, I tried every key but one depending from the ring, and still the great gate remained closed, none of them mating the lock. When I came to this last key a sudden horror came over me as I thought of the possibility of the whole affair being a trap to raise my hopes in the belief that I was about to escape, and then to have them hurled to the ground with shattering force. My life de-

pended on this key. Would it turn back the bars and give me freedom and life, or would it, like the others, mock with its silent contempt my anxiety? How I longed to know my fate, and yet dreaded the test, lest I should fail. My hand shook as with palsy, and made it well nigh impossible for me to insert the key. Then 'twas in the lock; and still I did not turn it.

Verily, I have faced the deadly cannon, oft, and yet have felt no anxiety nor fear. But now, as I stood before that heavy gate, with the key already in the lock, requiring but a turn—that is if it did work—to set me at least nearer unto liberty, my courage did forsake me, and I really feared to turn the key.

Some there are, I know, who will say it was unmanly in me to thus hesitate. Mine answer, in advance, is:—Let them but place themselves in the same position and see then how they will act. It requires but little courage to tell what one would do; but it is different when one doth face the reality and not the argument.

At length, with a mighty effort, such as a man doth make when heaving with his shoulder in an attempt to move a mighty boulder, I summoned up all my strength of spirit, and exerted pressure on the key. Thank Heaven, it turned! I would have cheered with delight had not the plain warning of the letter remained fresh in my mind. Softly we swung the gate open and passed be-

neath the arch. I was about to push on and leave the gate open behind, but Michael, who seemed less disturbed than was I—but then he had not been confined within the Tower for long weeks—whispered:—

"Beg pardon, sor, but dount ye think 'twould be safer to lock the gate agin? They moight follow loike."

With great care I closed and locked the gate. Then, stealing slowly, as doth the fox, along the wall, we in time reached the shadow of St. Thomas tower. It was so dark here that I could scarce see Michael; for now 'twas past the hour of midnight, and the young moon had grown weary and was sinking her head upon the lap of earth, casting long, black shadows as she sank into her sleep.

How I cursed my creaking, yet necessary, armour as I stole along.

Then my heart beat so loudly that I thought the sentry near which we were now drawing must hear it and break forth with his loud, disturbing challenge. Back and forth he paced with weary, clanking steps, unconscious of the two dark forms working their way slowly, and well nigh breathlessly, towards him. Now we were pressing against the wall, as he halted almost within arm's length before us. Verily, his eyes must have been closed in partial sleep, or he had seen us. Then he tramped round, as though he

"I climbed wearily to the top."—*Page 305.*

had been fastened to a cord which permitted him to go but to its length and then warned him to return.

At that moment I attempted to draw back still further. My spur struck the wall with a sharp click, and this did cause me to lose my balance, and mine armoured shoulders clanked against the stones.

The soldier turned like a flash of light, and brought his axe from shoulder unto thigh. He was about to challenge when Michael, forcing the axe's point above his head, clapped his mighty hand over the surprised sentry's mouth, permitting no sound to escaṗ

I seized the axe, lest it should fall and rouse the guard.

"Be quoiet, thou fool, and no harm 'll come unto thee," whispered Michael in the fellow's ear, as he held him firmly to the ground.

With haste I searched me for my scarf.

"It's here, sor, about moy hand; jist untoie it, playze sor. Sure a little blood 'll do thee no harm. Thou shouldst thank the Lord that it isn't thoine own." This to the sentry.

When he had been made fast at both hands and feet, the which we bound with his belt, after cutting the leather into two strings, and when he had been securely gagged with the scarf, we carried him and placed him close to the wall, and then I warned him.

"Now, sirrah, if thou dost lie still and make no attempt to free thyself, or to attract attention, thou shalt not be mistreated. But, by all the fiends, if thou dost make a movement thou shalt be ripped from ear to ear, and then thrown into the moat. We shall be near at hand, and any sound from thee must reach us."

Then we proceeded to the breach with less care than we had hitherto used. Here the wall was torn away until but a foot in height remained. The artisan's tools were laid upon this low wall, and were well nigh the cause of our ruin; for just as I made a move to cross the breach my foot struck upon the pile of tools and almost caused them all to fall into the moat. Carefully we removed them from our way, and then we descended into the water.

I had never before attempted to swim while dressed in a complete suit of heavy armour; and much therefore did I doubt mine ability to do so now.

"Didst thou ever swim across water, whilst dressed in thine armour?" I asked of Michael.

"Divil a toime, yer honour."

"It will be difficult, Michael, and I may be compelled to ask thee to lend me a hand."

"All roight, yer honour." And we set out.

I had not overestimated the difficulty of our task, and ere we reached the outer wall I was

glad to place my hand upon Michael's great shoulder to keep from sinking.

At length we reached the other side and, still struggling to keep our heads above the surface, we commenced to feel along the wall for the ladder mentioned in the letter.

"What if it should not be here?" I asked myself. Truly it should be a grand device for luring me unto my death; for it had been impossible for me to again cross the moat, so exhausted was I by the great exertion. Even the mighty giant by my side was breathing in great gasps, as though his Herculean strength were ebbing fast. Mine arms had now become so weak that I could scarce lift them above the surface for an instant that I might feel for the ladder.

"Here—sor," gasped my faithful squire, as he grasped me by the arm and drew me to him. "Oi—have it—at last—yer honour. The saints —be praised."

Yes, there it was, and how welcome did it feel to my trembling hand.

We remained thus, with our heads only above the water, for some moments, until we regained a part of our breaths.

I mounted the ladder first and climbed wearily to the top. Verily, never in all my life have I felt my body to be of such prodigious weight. Ah! I was on the top; and there I sat whilst Mi-

chael's enormous form came dripping out of the water below and wearily climbed the ladder.

"Mither-o'-Gawd! Oi fale loike a damned drowned rat." And indeed I felt as though the simile applied unto me most thoroughly.

Then we drew up the ropes and, unfastening the hooks, we reversed them and let down the ladder on the other side. Down this we went, and, thank Heaven, we were free from that great, black, menacing congregation of cold, cruel towers and walls.

I felt like a soul but new granted its release from the torturous fires of purgatory must feel as he looks back, with hunted, awe-struck eyes, at the place of his late confinement, and sighs with thankfulness for his freedom; yet shudders in fear that this liberty is but a dream from which he shall soon awaken to find himself again within the gates of agony.

Then we hastened on with soggy steps, making as wide an arch as the river would permit, that we might pass as far as possible from the Tower of St. Thomas.

We at length reached the place where Michael had left the horses. They were tethered in a shed attached to a vacant house not far from the walls of the Tower, and on the western side.

The sword that Michael had brought for my use was hanging from the lance-rest of the

saddle. Hastily buckling it on I felt once more a man and knight. Then, mounting our horses, we rode forth into the night, and, at no slow pace, started by the nearest way on our journey to the Sanctuary.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE HOUSE WITH THE FLAG

We had no difficulty in passing through the city's gates. I merely called out in commanding tone:—"On the King's most urgent business," and the great gates swung back upon their mighty hinges as though there had been magic in my speech. Mayhap 'twas fortunate that the King had many messengers passing in and out of the city that night, or our exit had not been so easily accomplished. As we dashed through beneath the arch the keeper called out:—

"Is it true that Richmond hath landed?"

"Ay, ay, 'tis true indeed," I cried over my shoulder in reply, and on we went as though the fiends pursued us. Our horses were urged to their utmost, that we might leave the Sanctuary ere the day did dawn.

Already was the East casting off her dark robe of night and decking herself in brighter colours.

When we entered Westminster and drew up before the Sanctuary the door flew open and there, standing by Harleston, by whom she was restrained from rushing from the house, was my own fair darling; her body leaning forward, and

her hand held above her eyes, as she peered into the darkness with a world of expectancy in her pose, as shown up right nobly by the lamp's bright light behind her.

Mary stood at Frederick's other side; her hand upon his arm, and also gazing forth.

Springing from my horse and handing the reins to Michael, I hastened towards them; taking care, however, to speak ere I did step into the rays of light, that the girls might not be startled by mine unannounced approach.

"Fear not, it is I—Walter."

"Oh, my dear, noble Walter!"

Harleston's arm no longer restrained, and we were locked in each other's arms in a shorter space of time than takes a thought to travel unto Heaven.

"Have a care, my darling, lest thou dost destroy that same handsome habit; for I am nothing if not thoroughly saturated."

Then I kissed the fair Mary as she still stood by Frederick's side, laughing and weeping both at once.

"My dear friend," said Harleston, "much am I joyed to see thee thus free from that bloody Tower. And now—though ere this I did fear to say so—I tell thee truly, I never thought to see thee here this night."

"But why?" I asked. "'Twas thou which sent the letter that did give unto me—with the

noble assistance of this brave friend here—my liberty," and I slapped Michael—who had tied the horses beneath the trees by the corner of the building, and now stood near me—on his huge arm.

"Do but come in and close the door, and I will tell thee all, in as few words as possible; for the time we have is short."

"Art not afraid to flee with me, my fair one?" I asked; and I drew Hazel closer to my side, as we were passing down the hall.

"Nay, nay, Walter dear; to the end of the world would I go with thee. When love, such as is mine, is in the heart it leaveth no room for fear. Mine only desire now is that we may, with all expediency, avoid our enemies; and when the Earl of Richmond doth conquer the bloody Richard, then may we return to happiness and have our dreams of other days fulfilled."

"Mine own dear, trusting love," I murmured, as I stooped and kissed her forehead.

The ex-Queen had waited up the whole long night that she might see if I did succeed in escaping from the Tower. How worn and sorrow-stricken she did look as I knelt and kissed her hand.

"I thank God, Sir Walter, that thou hast escaped the murderous boar," she said, in her kind and motherly way.

"So do I too, madam; for besides mine own wrongs I have yet to make a great effort and redeem mine oath made to the good King Edward, your noble husband. When my good friend here and I rode from Berwick unto the Castle at Windsor his Majesty did give unto us each a present worthy of the giver. At that time, madam, we both did swear to avenge any wrong that ever did transgress upon your royal son, our late lamented little King. Much time hath passed and still he's unavenged; but if the life within me be spared I'll yet strike a hard blow against his cruel and bloody murderer."

"Ay, ay, we will," assented Frederick.

"He'll doie fer the murtherin' o' the little darlin'," growled Michael from behind my back, where he towered like some grim monument.

I shamed to confess that I had forgot my faithful squire, until his voice recalled him to my mind.

"Madam, I beg that thou wilt permit me to make known unto thee the truest heart, as well as the strongest arm, in all England. Courage, loyalty, generosity and strength are all that do unite in this, your faithful servant." And I led Michael, who blushed like a maiden, before Elizabeth.

She spoke some kindly words unto him, and gave him her hand to kiss.

On his knee his head was still as high as hers. Gently he kissed the dainty fingers lying in his mighty palm, and then he arose without a word.

Why, oh why, are not the kings and rulers of men born with hearts like Michael's? Thy praises, oh my faithful squire, should be sung by masters skilled in the art of playing upon the sympathetic strings of the living harp, in place of the task, so full of possibilities, being left to the feeble hand of such an one as I. But then, who knows as well as thine old master the workings of that great heart whose every throb is one of loyalty?

But come, Sir Walter, hasten along in the path where lies thy story, and tarry not, like some gossiping old wife, at every house along the way, telling some news that helps thee not unto thy destination.

"I have more ill news for thee, Sir Walter," said Elizabeth, when Michael had arisen and resumed his former place, glad to be no longer the object on which we all did gaze.

"Heaven forbid!" I exclaimed devoutly.

"Nay, Heaven doth forbid no woe to fall upon mine untimely silvering head; and it is but just that I should have my punishment."

"But what new calamity may this be, madam?"

"Word reached me a week ago that my little Richard hath disappeared from the Sanctuary in

France, where my son, the Marquis of Dorset, left him.

"But comes the news from a trusty source?"

"Yes, from Dorset himself. It happened thus, he says:—

"Near-by where stands the Sanctuary there a great mount doth lift its rugged brow far above the natural level of the earth. Here did my little Prince delight to stroll and watch the sparkling waters far, far beneath his feet, rush in their tumbling haste from rock to rock along their never-ceasing course. Here last was he seen sitting, as was sometimes his wont, upon a boulder beneath a scraggling bush that there doth grow. At set of sun he came not to the house; so the good folk there went out to bring him in. Nowhere could they find him; and now 'tis thought he fell by accident, or intent, down, down into the cruel waters at his feet. From that day since he hath not been found; but his hat was by a traveller picked up and brought into the Sanctuary.

"Now my little Princes both have gone to join their father, and I—though God knows why—remain upon the earth.

"If little Richard be dead—the which must be only too true—we will make the Earl of Richmond King. Then shall my daughter, Elizabeth, be his Queen. This is all I can now hope for; but it shall be the means of ridding England of

blood-supping tyrants, and shall give unto me my long-desired revenge.

"Lord Stanley is now at the head of a strong force, and is marching from the North, apparently to meet the tyrant near by Leicester.

"Richmond is now well on his way to London; and as he comes great numbers flock unto his standard.

"Stanley will, at the last moment, leave the Usurper to his fate and side with the Earl.

"Sir Frederick, here, leaves this morning to join Lord Stanley.

"This evening, when thou dost return with our dear Hazel here, I can give thee a letter to the Earl. I would send it by Sir Frederick, but I do desire to give Earl Henry full particulars of the force that Richard doth take with him along. The powers of the Usurper's friends Richmond already knoweth. Mine agents shall bring in the desired information concerning the forces of the Usurper as soon as Richard doth leave the city."

"Then everything goeth well, so far as preparations are concerned, madam.

"About what time doth Richard march?"

"Soon after sun-up he did intend to go; at least so said the order given to me," replied Harleston.

"Then we will return before the set of sun.

"But what, madam, is your opinion of this same strange letter?"

"Truly, Sir Walter, I knew not of it until Sir Frederick told me its strange contents."

I then showed it to her in the hope that she might recognize the hand.

With great care did she observe the writing; then she raised her head and said:—"It looketh not unlike the hand of my Lord Stanley; though there is a tremble here not his. Mayhap he did disguise his hand to guard him from the danger of its falling into other hands than Sir Frederick's."

"And, Frederick, what dost thou think?" I asked.

"Verily, Walter, I was about to tell thee at the door—and since it had escaped my mind—of how I did mistrust that same packet until I saw ye both arrive safe and free." Then it was that he told me of his meeting Catesby as he left the Palace.

"And dost thou think it safe to go unto this house mentioned in the writing?"

"Well, since the rest of the directions have been so trustworthy I can see no danger in following the remainder. Besides, he continued, "there seemeth to be no other way so secure."

"Well, as no more time may be spared, methinks we had better start. I shame to doubt the writer's good intent, after the great favour he hath done me.

"Say farewell, for the present, my dear. We shall be back this evening."

Tenderly the ex-Queen embraced Hazel; and as I knelt she laid her gentle hand upon my head and said:—

"God protect thee, Sir Walter, and send thee back to me, with yon fair child, which loveth thee so dearly, safe to her widowed foster mother."

"Amen," said I softly, from the bottom of my heart.

"Farewell, dearest Hazel, and may the angels guard thee from, and strike dead those which could so much as harm thee with a thought," sobbed loving little Mary, as the two dear girls embraced and kissed each other.

"Farewell, Frederick," said Hazel—for now she looked on him as her big brother, and spoke unto him as such—"I may not again see thee until the fate of us all hath been decided. May Heaven bless thee and bring thee back to this dear girl, safe and victorious. And then may our old happy days that passed like sunbeams in the park at Windsor be repeated without disturbing interruption."

This was a confirmation of my suspicion that Harleston had asked Mary that question which is the London-stone in the lives of us all, and she had made the promise that I could, long months since, have told she would.

"Farewell, dear lady," returned Frederick, whilst Mary took advantage of his speech in trying to regain her wonted complexion; "I hope to see thee again ere a fortnight be past. One great battle shall decide our fate; and what that will be I am assured of."

Then turning to me he said:—"We shall meet, no doubt, in the ranks of the conquering Richmond. Till then farewell, my dear friend."

"Farewell, Frederick, we shall meet near Leicester; that is if Richard there awaits the Earl."

I kissed Mary, and she and Harleston did bid farewell to big Michael.

Then we proceeded to where our horses waited, Michael bearing upon his arm a basket, in which was our food for the day.

The morning was now well dawned, and the red bars from the fiery sun were glancing along the floor of Heaven in beauteous ribbons, like the gay trappings of a May-pole.

Hazel's palfrey was now brought up; and as we mounted and rode off, the little group at the door still stood and waved a silent, fluttering farewell.

We rode on in silence until we came to the turning that we should take, were we to be guided by the letter.

"This is the cross road mentioned in the packet. What think ye now of the writer? Dost trust him?" I asked.

"I trust him, and yet I feel some fear. I know not why; but a nameless something doth stir up in my mind a dread of some calamity."

"Shall we then go search for some place for ourselves?"

"Oh, no! It must be but foolish maiden timidity. Let us proceed and trust the letter, after the way that it hath rescued thee."

So we turned unto our right and, as the letter had said, we came, after travelling some three miles, upon a large house set back some distance from the road. From a window in the upper story a small flag of England did hang lazily. The house looked as it had been described—unoccupied; so feeling re-assured we rode into the grounds. I then held Michael's steed whilst he went forward and tried the door. It was unlocked; so he entered. He then returned, at my call, and reported everything as well, so far as he could see, though he desired to inspect it further ere we entered. This I did consider to be unnecessary. We then tied our horses to some trees near the door, and walked in.

The room was large and square, and in the centre a round pillar arose from floor to ceiling. The furniture consisted of a long and broad, heavy oaken table and some three or four chairs, scattered carelessly around the room. Several closed and heavy doors, leading to where we knew not, were set into the walls at irregular intervals.

The general appearance of the interior gave one the impression of recent occupation; though now it did seem undoubtedly to be vacant.

Michael placed the basket upon the table, and we at once proceeded to make ourselves comfortable.

"Ah! my dear, we shall have a pleasant holiday, and in the evening return. Our dear friend, Master Catesby, shall arrive at Westminster to find that the bird hath flown. Then he may curse his misfortune and proceed to join his murderous master. Pray God I do but meet him in the field. Then shall there be no truncheon to be flung down to stop our fight, as was done at the tournament."

"Yes, Walter dear, methought that thou hadst killed him when, with your great sword, you drove him senseless from his horse."

"But how didst thou see the tournament?" I asked in wonderment.

Her cheeks then flushed, and she became as confused as a child caught fairly in a trap. She glanced imploringly at Michael; but he seemed greatly occupied with the buckle of his sword belt.

"What! is it possible that thou wert one of the old ladies to whom Michael did show such attention?"

"In faith, Walter, thou hast guessed it; though I did not intend to tell thee yet."

"And was Mary the other?"

"Yes."

"Oh, ye are sly ones. And here is Michael also in the plot."

"Beg pardon, sor, but Oi tould ye the truth."

"Yea, that thou didst; but in your own peculiar way," I laughingly replied.

"Yes, Walter, Michael but did what we did ask of him, and therefore the whole blame belongs to Mary and me," said Hazel, as she came and patted me on the cheek. "Art not cross now?" she asked.

"Nay, but Frederick and I will bring ye to account when next we all do meet."

Soon we sat us down to the pleasantest meal that, methinks, ever had I partaken of. Clear of the gloomy Tower, and free, and there by my side the truest and most trusting maid upon the earth's broad face. And there was our huge Michael at the other side, eating and watching us with admiring eyes. Verily, my dears, no happier trio ever sat together, chatting like children at an outing. Hazel's dainty fingers had put each morsel in most tempting shape, and to add aught to her arrangement had been as difficult as to improve on the delicacy of soft moonlight, strained through the misty alabaster curtains of the Heavens.

"Now if Mary and Frederick were but here would it not be like our old happy days at the Palace at Windsor?" asked Hazel.

"Yea, indeed it should, but even more happy; for our troubles that are now past make us to appreciate happiness the more."

And so we talked on and were happy in our assurance that all should now be well and smooth, and after the battle we would go to mine old house that had stood waiting for its young master for many a day.

Then suddenly I heard a sound that startled me, and caused grave doubts as to our safety. It sounded not unlike a low whistle, and coming from some room within the house.

Michael's quick ear had heard it also; for he glanced anxiously first to me and then to Hazel.

She too had heard it, and her face changed from its merry smile to a startled look of fear.

"Didst thou not hear that whistle, Walter dear?" she asked in alarm.

"What whistle, dearest?" I asked, that I might allay her fears. "'Twas but thine imagination playing upon thine ears; 'twas nothing."

"Nay, 'twas no imagination; 'twas real,—and hark!—there again it is."

This time there could be no mistaking the sound. Methought it came from one of the three rooms that did adjoin the large one in which we were.

"Do thou go, Michael, and with great care open yon door and see if that room be occupied," I said in a whisper to my squire.

Drawing his heavy sword he advanced cautiously, and, turning the knob, he thrust the door wide open, whilst he remained at the threshold.

This room was empty; but on the opposite side from where stood Michael was another door, and to the right of this, in the other wall, was yet another.

Then I heard a slight click at the lock of the door by which we had entered the house. I drew my sword and walked to this door and tried to open it. It was locked.

Then the whole plot flashed upon my mind. This then was Catesby's plan for getting both Hazel and me within his power. No wonder that he did laugh as Harleston left the courtyard. Well might he laugh; for never did a trap work with more success than did this clever one, laid by this most ingenious scoundrel.

I went to the window and tried to loosen some of the bars that ran across the square. Even the great Michael's strength should here be of no avail. The bars were very heavy, and firmly imbedded in the masonry, of which the lower part of the house was made.

I watched the doors leading from the room in the expectancy that they were about to fly open and a band of men rush in to do their work. Still they did remain closed. Michael still stood before the open door, awaiting mine instructions.

After waiting for a few moments with the painful feeling that one has when convinced that the eyes of a concealed foe are on him, watching his every move, I walked to the great table and, placing my sword upon it, I moved it back across one of the corners of the room; thus forming a frail barricade to protect my dear Hazel.

I then placed my dagger in her hand and said:—"Be brave my dearest, and if thou seest that thou canst not escape with honour, thou knowest the use of this little weapon. However, so long as thou seest hope, refrain from its use; for even in our position no one can tell what the result may be."

"Fear not, Walter dear, unless I may be thy spotless bride my husband shall be death."

"Mine own dear, brave, little maiden," I murmured, and placed her, with a loving kiss upon her brow, behind the—in some measure—protecting table.

I then took up my good sword and, holding it at arm's length to test its reach, I said to Michael:—

"Do thou go, good Michael, to yon door, and see if there be any one within the room behind it."

"Oi will, sor." And he crossed the inner room in three good lengthy strides.

This door was unfastened, so he opened it as he had done the other, except that this one opened

towards him, and still stood he upon the threshold.

"Sure, yer honour, thare's anither door here, sor."

"Open it also, Michael;" though the next moment I had rather have cut the tongue from my throat than have uttered those words.

Michael had just disappeared into this second unexplored room when, with a crash, the door that had remained closed in the room adjoining where Hazel and I waited flew open, and several armed men rushed in.

"Beware Michael! come back! come back!" I cried in warning.

Ere he could obey, however, the door was closed and securely locked and barred behind him. At the same instant the room in which I stood was filled with soldiers, which entered by the other doors.

"Come on, ye pack of cowards! Why do ye hesitate? Do ye fear the single sword of one good knight? Come on, I say, ye pack of sneaking wolves that fear to attack, and yet stand in a circle round and growl!" I cried in defiance at them.

There must have been well nigh a score; something more than half in my room, and the others in the room betwixt Michael and us.

The giant now thundered at the separating

"Come on, ye pack of cowards."—*Page 326.*

door, and swore an unceasing stream of oaths of vengeance.

This door, however, was a heavy oaken one, and withstood even Michael's mighty assault with great endurance.

Still the soldiers stood waiting, swords in hands.

Presently, with leisurely, swinging stride and clanking armour, a smile of triumph on his sneering face, entered my dearest foe, Catesby. With a courtly bow, accompanied by a graceful wave of the hand, he saluted Hazel, who, with great calmness, stood with clenched hands and firm-pressed lips behind her barricade.

"Welcome, my dear lady, to this house that taketh in poor troubled refugees. Methinks the directions in my poor note must have been clear; for my guests have arrived even earlier than I had expected," said he, as he folded his arms and regarded us with a smile of satisfaction.

"Cease thine insolence, thou false and degraded knight, and draw thy sword and fight me like a man, and do not further stain thy name by setting upon a gentleman a band of coward ruffians!"

"Nay, nay, Sir Walter, we have twice crossed swords ere this, and on both occasions thou didst have the better of me. Verily, thou must be selfish to ever desire to play the victor's part. Oh, no!"

he added with a laugh, "I now do hold the stronger hand, and it should be casting an insult upon the Goddess of Fortune to thus throw aside her bounteous gift of advantage.

"Do thou close yon door and lock it, Peter," said he, turning to a fellow which stood behind him and which carried his arm in a sling; "that loud disturbing Irishman doth interrupt my speech. And besides," he continued, with some uneasiness, as I thought, "that door doth seem not strong enough for his beastlike strength. This other here is stouter."

The fellow with the disabled arm—no doubt 'twas he which did attempt to murder me in my tent—then closed and locked the door, whilst three of the soldiers remained in the inner room, that they might check the gallant Michael, should he succeed in breaking down the door. And indeed it now sounded as though the oak must give way; for the giant had ceased his oaths, and all his breath was now being used to support his great strength, that was being exerted on the creaking opposition.

I almost smiled as I thought of the fate of the three men when the great man should rush in upon them.

"And now, Master Catesby," said I, "wilt thou enlighten me as to thine object, in as few words as possible? for mine ears have no desire

to listen to thee at length, nor have mine eyes the wish to gaze upon thy recreant body.

"Then hear my purpose in thus luring ye both into this place. I do desire to have yon same lady, which in her fear is even more beautiful than when she smileth, delivered up into my hands. Her safety and tender treatment thou mayest be well assured of; for I do love her to distraction.

"As for thyself, if thou dost offer no resistance, then shalt thou be permitted to go forth from this place a free man, even though I do hate thee as I do a viper."

I bowed, and smiled grimly, and he continued.

"If thou dost resist; well, thou knowest that thou needst not to expect mercy."

"Is that all?"

"That is all."

"Then know, thou slave of degradation and all that is most abominable, that I, as would any man, reject thy base proposal, with words too poor and weak to express, in any good measure, my contempt for the proposer."

At this moment the inner door fell from its hinges with a crash; and then the adjoining room was filled with oaths and the ring of fearful blows.

"Come then, make haste!" cried Catesby to his followers, "yon Herculean savage hath burst

through the inner door. Next will he break down this; unless those knaves do stop him."

Then the whole pack of varlets rushed upon me from all points but my back, where the table did prevent them from surrounding me.

"Ha! thou caitiff! ha! thou slave!" cried I, as I struck down the two foremost of the assassins.

"What! do ye hesitate, and shrink from a single sword? Strike him down, ye varlets, or at your peril stay a hand until we have him!" and the chieftest of mine attackers drew forth his sword and, stepping o'er the body of one of his fallen band, he did engage with me so hotly as to cause me to use all of my defence in guarding me from his fierce cuts and thrusts.

In then there rushed the others; but so many were there that they did interfere with each other; thus enabling me to still guard off their blows with my good armoured left arm.

Michael had now overcome his three antagonists, and thundered with his mighty shoulders against the remaining door. I knew that this would be more difficult to break down; for, besides being more heavy, as Catesby had said, it opened towards Michael, and this did add greatly unto its powers of resistance. I dared not turn mine eyes towards the door, lest on mine head a stunning blow should fall.

My left arm now had lost its wonted strength,

with guarding of the many blows that fell so hard and thick upon it.

"Now we have him! Press him both close and hard!" cried Catesby, as he renewed, with all his activity, his lightning-like attack.

Never in my life have I, before that day nor since, fought with such quickness or strength. I was as a madman for the nonce, and fought with the delight of intoxicated recklessness. My sword seemed everywhere at once, and even the shifty Catesby was pressed back. I stepped forward in the delirium of feverish thirst for slaughter.

"Walter, beware! beware!" cried Hazel.

But it was too late. I had stepped too far forward, and thus permitted one of the pack to get behind me. A crushing, ringing blow upon my helm,—a shrill and piercing shriek from Hazel, that lived in mine ears, and died out at last as though by distance,—and I clattered to the floor, unconscious.

Mine oblivion could not have lasted for more time than whilst one might tell a score; for when I regained consciousness Michael still crashed against the separating oak, and there was Hazel standing behind her feeble barricade and holding in her small white hand the dagger that I had placed there.

"Stand back, thou traitorous, deceiving hypocrite! Advance towards me but one short step

more and this dagger's bright blade shall be dyed red with mine own heart's blood!"

Ah! my children, had ye but seen her then, as she stood there, as pale as a marble statue; yet with flashing eyes and heaving breast, her dainty tapering fingers of the right hand grasping, with all her little flower-like strength, brittle yet easily snapped, the little weapon, ye would have cheered in unrestrained admiration of the dear, brave, little maid.

Catesby stood back in awe of this goodly sight, which even his villainous heart could not help but admire.

"Well, and right nobly done!" he cried. "Thy courage in thus resisting doth but arouse within my love-sick heart a new and fiercer, and e'en more consuming passion for thee. Like a boy, I ever love the apple that doth hang from the limb most difficult to reach. The more the rich, ripe fruit doth avoid my grasping hand the more determined am I to have it."

"Cease thine insulting speech, false knight, cowardly assassin, 'tis I that commandeth thee! I, thine ancient foe, that even now defies thee!" and I struggled, tottering to my knees, and shook my clenched fist in defiance at him.

"Come on, Michael! break down the door, and we yet can drive this murdering pack before us, as doth the wind dry leaves!"

"Oi'm comin', yer honour; do but hould out a

little," and the fury of his attack upon the door was redoubled.

Catesby made a sign with his hand, and instantly four men left the room in haste.

"Beware, Michael! they may attack thee from the rear!" I cried, as I staggered to my feet and tried to rush upon mine enemy. I was securely held back, however, by two of the pack, who forced me to my knees and held me there.

Catesby merely smiled his hellish smile, and said:—"Bind him hard and fast to yon pillar, and strip him of his helm. We shall now try another plan to capture yon same tempting apple," and he nodded in Hazel's direction.

With cords they bound me until I could not move a muscle. Helmless and helpless I then stood before my fiendish foe, which drew his dagger and advanced upon me.

"Stop! stop, thou wretch!" shrieked Hazel. "For the welfare of your soul slay not a helpless man. Nay, nay, do but wait, I pray thee! I will do that which thou dost ask! I will go with thee! anything thou wilt, if thou wilt but spare him!"

"Hazel, in God's name hold thy peace! If thou dost love me do as I have said! I fear him not; let him do his worst; but use thy dagger ere thou dost permit this villain to lay on thee a hand!"

"Oh, yes, yes, Walter; but I cannot bear to see thee die before my very eyes! Oh, merciful Mary, it is too awful!" she cried, as Catesby seized mine

ear and with his dagger clipped off a small part of the lobe.

The tough oaken door did still resist the efforts of the giant; but it was plain that it could not long endure.

"Be brave, mine own true little love, Michael shall soon be here!" I called out above the din.

"So, madam, will I cut him into small pieces here before thee, unless thou dost surrender. Thou canst save him by coming from behind that table. Bethink thee of his fate in case thou art obdurate," said the accursed knave, as he seized mine other ear and raised the dagger.

The door was now cracked almost from top to bottom, and Michael still stormed his blows upon it.

"Uh! ye cursed cowards! Oi'll crack yer damned skulls fer ye in a minute! Uh! ye blood-suckin' divils, Oi'll rip ye all to paces and cram ye down yer own bloody throats!"

Louder cracked the door.

"Come, lady, your answer; make haste e'er the door giveth way."

"Hold out, my brave girl! we yet shall conquer!" I cried in encouragement.

Hazel leaned forward, with her left hand leaning upon the table, her body stretched forward, her lips compressed until no colour did remain in them. With her right hand she struck, quickly, the dagger into the table's top, then drew it out

and struck again. Still was she silent,—and a small piece came off mine other ear.

"Oh, God! God! God! it is too much! too much!" shrieked the poor maiden; and, throwing her hands above her head, she fell forward upon the table as though she were dead.

Catesby and one of his men then rushed to where she lay, and seized her in their arms and started for the door.

"Touch her not with your contaminating hands! Oh! false knight, I will have the last drop in thy heart for this! Oh, thou accursed slave of Hell! unbind me, and I will tear out thy throat with my bare fingers!

"Michael! for God's sake come! they are carrying her off with them!" and I cursed, and shrieked, and struggled with my bonds until they cut deep into my wrists.

"All Hill take this accursed door! It'll go now, or Oi'll brake moy damned back!"

There was a tremendous crash; the whole house did seem to shake; and Michael burst through the door with parts of it still clinging to his armour, which was battered from head to foot; and his great hands were red with blood.

"At last Oi'm here, yer honour; but, Oi fear, too late," gasped he, as he tried the outer door, and found it locked.

He then cut with his dagger the cords that bound me. Too late, too late we were indeed.

Another door had to be battered down ere we were able to gain the outside. This occupied some time, and when at last we did rush tottering forth we found no sight of our enemies, or our dear, brave, little maiden.

Our horses reins had been cut, and the beasts themselves were wandering far from the house.

How Michael did swear, as tenderly he bound up mine ears with pieces of the cloth that had served to cover the basket we had brought.

"Oh, sure sor, Oi did moy viry bist; but Oi couldn't git through in toime, yer honour. Forgive me, Sor Walter; but Oi'll nivir rist till Oi have the varmint, and the dear swate Lady Hazel is safe returned to thee, sor," sobbed the poor fellow, like a child, as he knelt at my feet, praying pardon for not having accomplished more, in but a few short moments, than three ordinary men might do in one whole day, and then feel proud of their work.

"Rise, my brave Michael, and never again ask of me pardon; for thy mighty work this day hath saved my life, and, had it been within the power of man, it would have saved the Lady Hazel."

Michael brought out my helm and put it on me. The wounds in mine ears were mere trifles; so I suffered no inconvenience from my headpiece.

We caught our horses and, after mending their harness, we mounted and set out for Leicester, by roads not travelled by the army.

Now was I determined to join Lord Stanley's force in time to take part in the great battle. There would I meet Catesby, and kill him; and somewhere near would I find Hazel.

I did neither storm nor gnash my teeth, as is my wont when my temper doth control my reason; but with quiet bearing, and lips drawn tightly in, I rode straight forward under the bright sun that glistened so on Michael's battered armour. Thus steadily could I have ridden unto the end of the earth, and never would I rest in peace until I found the man which so had wronged me.

Michael did seem to share my mood; for no word did he speak; but sat his steed with his head thrust slightly forward and a fearful look of unrelenting vengeance stamped on his firm-cut features.

There could be no escape for Catesby. He might cross the world; but still his grim fate would follow and o'er take him.

"He can never escape me," I kept repeating in my mind. Hell's fire seemed burning in my heart; but outward I was cold, deliberate and as unchangeable of feature as is the London-stone.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FIELD OF BOSWORTH

ON the fourth day following, and late in the afternoon, we at last found the camp of Lord Stanley.

Once we came near running our heads through the noose, and there ending all our hopes and fears.

It was just as we were nearing the town of Bosworth, in our search for Stanley's force, that we fell in with a straggling body of yeomen and some few men-at-arms. I asked them to direct me to Lord Stanley's camp.

"Straight ahead, sir, until thou comest unto the first turning to the right. Here turn, and that road will take ye unto your destination, which is the Town of Bosworth," replied their leader.

I thanked him and rode on, following his directions.

Soldiers of all ranks and arms were hurrying along by every road.

Presently we drew in sight of Bosworth. The town seemed filled with soldiers, and others were arriving at every moment.

"Ho! sirrah, canst thou inform me whose force

it is that occupies yonder town?" I asked of a straggler by my side.

The fellow stared at me in surprise for a breathing space and then answered:—"Why, his Majesty King Richard's, to be sure. Thou didst not think that Richmond had taken it, didst thou?"

"Hill!" ejaculated Michael.

I came near to betraying mine emotion; but controlled myself in time and asked:—"But where doth Lord Stanley keep his camp?"

"To the North and West about a mile, sir."

I muttered a prayer of thanksgiving for mine escape from falling into the hands of mine enemies, and wheeling our horses about we retraced our steps until we came upon the road that we had left at the direction of the yeoman. This we pursued for some little distance, and then we beheld Lord Stanley's camp before us.

We rode up to before the noble Lord's tent and to the guard before the door I gave my name and asked to be admitted.

The soldier had scarcely entered when out rushed Harleston.

"Ah! my dear friends!" he cried to Michael and me, "how is it that I have the delight of having ye both here? Methought ye were with the noble Earl," and he nodded to the westward.

"But why are ye so glum; hath aught gone amiss?" he asked, with an anxious look.

"Ay, Frederick, everything has gone amiss." And then I told him all the sad news.

When I had finished he stood gazing thoughtfully before him. Then he put his hand upon my shoulder, and tenderly he said:—

"I need not tell thee to be brave; that thou ever art. But console thee I may. Bethink thee now of that which shall happen to-morrow. Then shalt thou have thy revenge; for the noble Richmond is not one to let go, with his head upon his shoulders, such an one as Catesby."

"Ay, but think of that which may happen to my dear Hazel ere we have Catesby in our power."

"Nay, thou must not think her peril greater than it is."

"How is it possible for it to be greater than it is? Is she not in that fiend's power?"

"That I grant you. But remember that Catesby must be greatly occupied with his master's business, and shall have short time in which to inflict his plague-like presence on her.

"Her, no doubt, he hath sent to some place of safety, where she shall remain until after the battle.

"The Usurper's friends all think that their victory is assured, and that Richmond, ere sunset to-morrow, shall be without a head. Little do they suspect that Northumberland's forces will move not to foul Richard's aid; or that Lord Stanley

here, and his brother there, will join with the noble Richmond.

"Catesby will take his time and, when thou art dead, the which he thinks thou soon shalt be, he'll go and gently woo the Lady Hazel. This doth Catesby intend to do, or else I do know nothing of the man."

"Dost thou think thus, indeed, my friend; or do you say these words that thou mayst comfort me with false hopes?" I asked, as I trembled with hope and fear.

"Verily do I believe that which I said will prove to be the case."

"Thanks, thanks! my friend. Thou knowest not the load that thou hast taken from my heart. What, oh what could I do without the aid of thy clear insight into the motives and the thoughts of all men?"

"Nay, nay, flatter me not," he replied, with a depreciating smile; "thou hast the same, if not a better, judgment, if thou wouldst but be calm and use it."

"Jist wait till to-morrow, and Master Catesby 'll fale the weight o' moy hand," growled Michael, whose features still wore their look of grim determination.

Lord Stanley received me most cordially, and expressed his regret at my great misfortune in falling into the trap set with such prodigious skill by Catesby.

"Do but be patient, Sir Walter," said he, in that kindly voice of his, "to-morrow's work shall tell a different tale. Richard doth despise his foe, and his great conceit doth cause him to underestimate the hatred his subjects have for him.

"I have a scar upon my head, the which must be revenged. Besides, he hath taken my son, George Stanley, to keep as an hostage for my loyalty. That I may save my son's life it shall be necessary for me to hold back my forces from taking part against the boar, until such time as he doth engage with Richmond. Then shall the tide of battle change, and England shall be freed of tyranny."

That night, Harleston, Michael, and I, all occupied the one tent, and again was the tournament brought afresh to my mind, and with it an even more intense hatred of my powerful foe, which I now felt I would soon have within my power to crush. With the sweet thoughts of a speedy vengeance for all my wrongs, I at length fell into a restless sleep, from which I was awakened by the shrill blast of the startling trumpet.

The day was just dawning; but with no great cheer of brightness. The great hollow plain of Redmoor looked dark and misty, as though it did dislike and dreaded the shock of battle that soon was to disturb its gloomy, brooding stillness.

When we had breakfasted and armed, the sun had risen sufficiently high—though still did he

remain behind a thick and dreary covering—to enable us to watch the movements of the two opposing armies.

The shape of this battle-field—as ye all do know—is that of a shallow saucer, with one side chipped out, or flattened.

From the right of us Richmond's army, numbering some six thousand men, all told, advanced slowly down the gentle slope to meet the tyrant and his force of some twelve thousand, or thereabouts, approaching from the other side.

We now saw that Stanley had well chosen his ground for the successful carrying out of his plan; for as the two unequal forces did approach each other it became evident that they must meet directly in front of us.

Soon the archers were engaged, and the deadly arrows flew through the intervening space like hail.

Our force, of seven thousand goodly warriors, was now drawn up in lines, and the command was given to advance.

Slowly did we march down towards the opposing armies that now were engaged with the full fury of those that have received their baptism of arrow's flight. As we drew near there was a temporary lull in the clamour of the battle. Then we swung around and bore down upon the Usurper's forces from the Earl of Richmond's side.

Then was the heavy air rent asunder with loud,

ringing cheers from Richmond's men, and foul curses and shouts of defiance from the Usurper's side.

Now did the battle rage with a redoubled fury. The army of the valiant Earl fought with the confidence of ultimate success; whilst Richard's struggled on with desperation. Our archers fought side by side with Richmond's foreigners.

"God and St. George!" rang forth on every side above the battle's din.

Then came the order which we knights had all been long awaiting.

"Charge, gallant knights of England! A Richmond! A Richmond! Victorious laurel crowns await us!"

Then the long lances with their fluttering streamers bent all together as they were laid in rest. How looked they like the full grown field of grain as it doth bend before the hot blasts of summer.

"Now, Walter, we must find Catesby!" cried Harleston.

"Yea, *I* must find him," I replied between my set teeth, as forward we dashed.

Michael gave one great cheer and then leaned forward with his mighty sword, that took the strength of two good men to wield, held beside his huge steed's neck.

On we flew, whilst forward dashed a band of knights and squires to meet us.

"Charge! charge! charge!" rang out on every side.

A crash!—curses,—cheers and groans! and then the sharp swords flashed over head, and the shields rang out right lustily.

My lance did resist the shock of the first encounter; the knight against whom I aimed it going down before my furious charge as though he had been a reed.

Sharply I spurred my steed and dashed forward at another knight, which bravely came on to meet me. Both lances shivered up to the very grasp. Drawing my good sword I again made at him. Then came a terrible blow upon my side, and I was shot from my saddle as a stone from a sling. Some cowardly knave had borne down upon me from the right whilst I was drawing my sword to attack my more worthy antagonist. His lance's point had struck beneath mine arm, and 'twas to our good King Edward's noble present that I owed my life.

I must have been stunned for a moment; for the next thing I knew of was a knee upon my chest and a visored face bending o'er me.

"Now I will finish the work left incomplete when last we met." It was Catesby.

In his hand he held a dagger, and now he drew it back to strike.

The only sensation I then felt was a curiosity to know how it would feel to die. The stroke I

cared not for; but yet I wondered, with a kind of disinterestedness, how one would feel as the soul was parting from the body. It must have been that my senses were still scattered, or I had not acted thus. No resistance did I make; but with an indifferent feeling awaited the fatal blow where my helm joined my gorget.

All this could not have taken more time than does the lightning to fly across the heavens; for still the dagger stayed poised in the air.

"Hark ye!" hissed Catesby in mine ear. "Take with thee this message unto Hell. Say that I, Catesby, did send thee to thy master, and that, unless the fortunes of the day be changed, I'll not be long behind thee." Then up higher flew the threatening blade. Then did it start on its downward course. It never reached my throat. A great hand seized mine enemy by the wrist; back flew the dagger-grasping hand until the arm snapped like a dry stick. Catesby flew into the air as though drawn by a mighty load-stone. Then was he hurled to the ground again with stunning force, and my great Michael kneeled beside me.

"Art thou hurt, yer honour?" he asked anxiously.

"Nay, Michael; I got but a sudden fall that dazed me. 'Twas for a moment only; now again do I feel a man." And with Michael's assistance I arose to my feet.

Then Catesby stirred, and Michael was upon him in an instant; dagger in hand, and drawn back for the fatal blow.

"Hold! hold, Michael! slay him not! I must question him!" I cried.

"Uh! bad luck to me fer a blunderin' fool; sure we must foind out whare he has the dear lady kipt, ere we send the varmint to roast in sulphur."

"Come, Master Catesby, our late respective positions are now reversed," said I calmly and distinctly, that my speech might be clear to his dazed senses. "Dost hear me?"

In a feeble voice, and with the use of many curses intermixed with groans, he answered that he did.

"Before thou diest thou shalt have an opportunity for the making of some slight restitution for the many wrongs that thou hast done to me. Tell me where I may find the Lady Hazel."

He raised himself up and leaned on his well arm, whilst the other did hang limp and twisted at his side.

"And what shall I receive for the telling of this to thee?"

"The weight of one good act to place opposite to the great load of evil on the scales of justice, when thou dost shortly appear before the seat of judgment."

"Ha, ha, ha!" loud did he laugh. "And dost

thou then think that I am bereft of reason, to thus fling from me all that I do possess wherewith to buy my life? Nay, unless thou dost spare my life, thou mayest search from now until thy death, ere thou dost find the lady that thou seekest."

I held my dagger to his throat, but still he did hold his secret fast.

"Thy miserable life is then spared, for the present, if thou dost tell me where the lady is."

"And wilt thou forbid yon demon from murdering me?"

"Thou shalt not be harmed by either of us; but for thy treatment at the hands of the Earl of Richmond I cannot speak.

"Agreed! my life shall rest upon the hazard of this battle, as it did ere we met this day."

"Remember, if thou liest it shall be thy last; for thou dost still remain my prisoner."

"Go then unto the Town of Leicester—if thou ever canst—and within the Sanctuary near Grey Friars' Church thou shalt find the lady. There was she sent from the house in which I left thee, and there did I obtain admittance for her. I have not seen her since thou hast; but last evening I went unto the place and gave strict orders that there she must be kept until I sent or came for her. Thou canst not get her out without this ring. Here, draw it from my finger."

This I did, and then I commanded Michael to take him to the rear of Richmond's army.

I felt no fear of Catesby's escape; for he might as well have tried to escape from the unrelenting gates of Hell, as from the mighty Michael.

The battle raged not nearby where I stood; but down at the marsh the fight was at its thickest.

Hastily did I secure a horse, and I spurred him hard as I made for Richmond's standard.

The royal banner of England now dashed forward, and the two flags were well nigh together.

"This now must be the finish," cried I, as I waved my good sword in circles round my head.

Then came there forward, like a thunderbolt, Sir William Stanley's gallant horsemen, and rode abreast with me.

Down sank the gallant standard of the noble Earl, as Richard himself smote to the ground Sir William Brandon, who had carried it. Another knight sprang forward from the side of Richmond and faced the desperate tyrant. He met the same fate as Brandon. Richmond waved his sword in defiance of the boar, and the two men were like to meet; but I got betwixt them and caught Richard's blow upon my shield.

"Ha! Bradley! Escaped, runagate traitor! Have at thee!"

Again did I catch his savage blow, and this time I gave him my straight point beneath his helm.

At that very moment another good knight dashed in and, as he saw Richard strike at me, he thought that I was Richmond. His bright blade

flashed through the air and struck the tyrant fair upon his helmed head. Two such fierce blows, falling both at once, drove Richard from his saddle as though a bolt from Heaven had struck him.

Down from my steed I sprang, and with my dagger clipped the laces of his headpiece. Already the eyes were rolled far back, and stared up blindly at me. Not a quiver stirred his frame. He had died in the twinkling of an eye.

The sun now rent asunder the clouds of Heaven, as had the two flashing swords torn the darkest clouds that had surrounded us all for so long a time, and the whole field was filled with brightness. Mayhap it was the resounding shouts of victory of our now half-crazed army that did rend the heavy clouds; for one could scarce hear himself cheer, so loud were the shouts of gladness all around us.

The remnant of the dead tyrant's force—for above four thousand had been slain—offered no further resistance, and the great majority of them did join in and cheer for the victorious Earl.

Then Harleston grasped my hand. His visor was raised up and his face was flushed with pleasure and exertion.

"Well, Bradley, our oath, made to King Edward, hath been kept; we have revenged the murder of his little son.

It was he who had struck down Richard at the same moment as had I.

Richmond dismounted and, kneeling, he thanked God for his great victory. Then he arose and grasped both Harleston and me by the hands, and heartily he thanked us for the part that we had played.

Sir William Stanley now advanced to where the Earl of Richmond stood. In his hand he carried the light, gold crown that had been worn by Richard in the battle. This he placed upon the victor's head, and then we all knelt down and cried:—"God save King Henry!" Then, as do the waters spread out in ever widening circling waves after a stone hath been dropped through their smooth surface, the cries of:—"God save King Henry!" swept throughout the whole delirious army.

"Great God, I thank thee for this bounteous gift presented by the hands of these, thy faithful servants," said Henry devoutly, as again he kneeled.

"May I rule this, my fair, native land with justice, and under thy direction."

Then again we all arose, and deafening cheers swept with redoubled vigour over the plains of Redmoor.

"Throw yon bloody carrion across the back of some degraded horse, and then on to Leicester,

where we will spend the night," said the King, as he pointed to Richard's body.

Frederick and I had little difficulty in finding Michael; for during the preceding scene he had forced his way through the crowd and stood near behind us. We then joined in with the guards of our new sovereign and rode on to Leicester, with hearts lighter than they had been for many a long, black day; and yet with anxious minds, as we wondered whether Catesby had told the truth or no.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONCLUSION

WHEN we reached our destination we handed Catesby over to the proper authorities, and from that time we had naught to do with his fate.

We hastened by the shortest way to the Grey Friars' Church, and from there, when we had been directed, we went to the Sanctuary.

Catesby had spoken the truth; the ring that I had taken from his finger gained for us admittance.

At first Hazel refused to see us, and prayed protection of the church folk.

Then I remembered me, and sent unto her our names. Instantly then were we admitted into her presence, and happy reunion took the place of torturous separation and maddening anxiety.

"Come now, art happy and content?" I asked, when our joyous greeting had gone the rounds.

"Yes, yes, so happy now, dear;—but how are thine ears?" she broke in suddenly.

"Tush! 'twas a mere nothing; he but cut off the skin."

However, she would not be content until I had

taken off my helm and she had redressed the slight wounds.

"But what became of him?" she asked, as a shudder ran through her frame. "I have not seen him since he was torturing thee. The next I knew I was within a closed, wheeled litter, travelling at a fearful pace, and this woman here, beside me. I tried to get out, but could not. Armed men rode all around the litter. Steadily did we travel on, stopping but seldom to get fresh horses, food, and some little rest, until we reached this place. Here have I been locked up and treated as a mad woman."

"The fiend!" I cried.

"Yes, Catesby had evidently been here and told them that I was his mad sister, which thought I was another, and this woman here hath been my keeper since I came."

I walked over to where the woman—an old hag—was crouched on a bench in a corner, trembling with fear.

"Thou mayest leave this place at once, madam," I said, "and thank God, which made thee so, that thou hast at least the sex of a woman.

"Your master is now the prisoner of our new King Henry, and, unless the aforesaid King be of more forgiving nature than I think, Catesby shall soon be with his master, the usurping tyrant, Richard, which is even now in Hell's consuming fire."

"Oh, poor Sir William!" she wailed. "Ah, sir! I nursed him at my breast, and ever since have I been his servant. Oh! save him, sir! I know he did have his faults; but still do I love and serve him, as though he were mine own. For God's sake, sir, speak but a word to your new King, and thou canst save him! Return good for evil, now that thou hast the power!" and she knelt at my feet and threw her arms about my legs.

"Strange," thought I, "that even such a villain as is Catesby hath some one who loves him." Then aloud I said:—"It must not be. My wrongs are not the only ones that he must answer for. Catesby hath writ a volume of misdeeds, and the whole world hath perused them. No man can stop the bad effects of these in other ways than by the suppression of the one that doeth them."

"Wilt thou not have mercy on him, Walter dear?" asked the tender-hearted maid which now clung to my side.

I started in surprise. "What! dost thou plead for Catesby?" I asked.

"Nay, not for him; but for this old woman here. She hath done naught but obey her master. Save the knave, Walter, for this old woman's sake. We can now afford to be generous, Walter dear; now that all danger is past. Besides, he can do no harm, and mayhap your generosity will show him the evil of his acts, and he will then repent," and she stroked my cheek coaxingly.

Truly, a woman is the most unfathonable work of God. Here was this maid, quick as a hornet to resent a wrong, and yet forgiving as a dove when the danger had passed.

I hesitated; but her tender eyes were on me, and I could not resist their wondrous charm.

"Well,—I will see what may be done," I replied slowly, and with great reluctance. "But remember, I have little thought that he can avoid the block, or halter."

Then I went unto the King's headquarters and told him my request.

"What, Bradley! spare the life of Catesby; the man that so hath wronged thee? By the light of Heaven! my long sojourn across the channel hath made me to forget the nature of an English gentleman! But may I ask your reason for this strange request?" he asked more seriously.

I told him.

"'Tis but an old woman's whim; but even so I had been glad to grant thee this request; but thou art too late. His head was stricken off but a few moments before thou camest."

"Thank Gawd!" growled Michael from the door, whither he had followed, as faithful as my shadow.

"And is this a friend of thine?" asked the King.

"Ay, your Majesty, he is my noble squire. To him, your Grace, do I owe my life a score of

times." And then I told him of the worthy Irishman.

When I came to the part that Michael had played that day the King exclaimed:—

"What! captured Catesby! Kneel down my faithful subject. What is thy name?"

"Moichael O'Brien, yer Majesty."

The King drew forth his sword and laid it upon the mighty shoulder. "Arise, Sir Michael O'Brien."

Still did not Michael stand; but merely raised his head and stared in bewilderment at the King.

"Come, Sir Michael, let me be the first to congratulate thee on thy distinction," said I, as I grasped his hand and raised him to his feet.

He could not speak, but looked his surprise and thanks more eloquently than could have been expressed by a whole volume of words.

When we reached the Sanctuary I informed the old hag that I had been too late to save Catesby.

How she howled and chattered like a mad creature, and Hazel, like the dear forgiving angel that she hath ever been, comforted this old woman with soft, soothing words, and at last succeeded in quieting her. The old woman was then led off to another room, and since that day I never have beheld her. And for this I am thankful; for I could not look upon her without mixed emotions of hate and sympathy struggling within my heart.

The next morning the dead tyrant was buried, and Frederick, Michael, and I went to Grey Friars' Church to look the last upon the one on which the result of our oath made to his brother had fallen. I touched his hand. In death he was as cold as a salamander, and 'tis like his soul was in that place where this peculiar beast best flourishes.

"Richard succeeded better than I thought possible, when he drew in the ship of power," said Harleston. "But when the sailors found what kind of captain they did have to rule them they mutinied and killed their tyrant master."

"His tower of crime did fall, and it crushed its builder, as thou saidst it should," said I.

"Yes," replied Frederick.

Then he continued in his musing way; his head bowed in thought.

"We are all but dry leaves, lying upon the ground of time. The gust of life doth come along, and it hurls us some distance from the earth. On we travel for a short space; some of us sailing higher than the others. The breeze dies out, and we all do fall back to the same low level."

The truth of Harleston's words was made most clear to me then, as I gazed upon the corpse of him who had been, but a short time since, a King, and now was a cold lump of earth, such as we all must be.

We then went to ask the King for his permis-

sion for us to return to Westminster with the Lady Hazel.

His Majesty received us in a most friendly manner, and granted us the desired permission.

"I suppose," said he, as we were leaving his presence, "that I need not ask thee, Sir Walter, nor thee, Sir Frederick, to remain at my court when I do reach London; for I have heard of two fair maidens which ye do intend to make your wives. Well, ye are both right, and, when the Government hath been set in order, I do intend to follow your worthy example, and wed the fair, budding young Elizabeth. Ye both have my heartiest wishes of the happiness that ye have won through many dark days of misery, and by your gallant acts in the liberating of England from a rule of tyranny. Never doubt but that ye ever shall live in my memory, or that I ever will neglect some small reward for noble service rendered."

"Thanks, thanks, your Majesty!" we replied.

"And if your Grace doth ever require—the which pray God ye never may—two trusty swords, thou shalt never be compelled to send an order for them," said Harleston with a heartiness that could not be mistaken.

"Well do I know that, sirs." Then turning to the gigantic fresh-dubbed knight, he said:—

"Sir Michael, thou hast no love that will keep thee from remaining with us at the Palace?"

The mighty man started, and looked imploringly at the King, and then hopelessly at me; yet spoke he not a word.

"Come, Sir Michael," said I, "speak freely your mind to his Majesty. He is not the tyrant Richard, that ever hated men to give their honest thoughts expression."

Still did he hesitate and grew more confused with each breath.

"Ah! I see the trouble, and I think none the less of thee for thy feeling," said the King, with admiration in his voice and manner, as he walked to where Michael stood and put his hand upon the honest shoulder. "Thou dost still wish to abide with your old master, and yet fear to displease me with refusing my request. Come, am I not right?"

"Sure, that's the houle truth o' the thing, yer Majesty."

"Then go with Sir Walter, my good friend. Such loyalty doth raise thee in mine estimation. I know full well that should I ever need thee, thou wilt flash thy good sword betwixt the two of these good friends."

"Oi thank yer Majesty."

"Farewell, my faithful friends. In London soon I hope to see ye all."

As we left the room in which this interview took place I felt a great lump rise up in my throat, as I thought of my faithful Michael's loyalty.

No word did I speak unto him; but I took his great hand in mine and pressed it hard.

Right after dinner we set out for Westminster and proceeded rapidly, until we reached the Sanctuary late in the second day following.

Joyous then was our reunion. The girls, the Queen and her daughters embraced, laughed and wept, whilst we men, which have no part in such scenes, stood and looked uncomfortably on.

The next day, without preparation, there took place in the chapel of the Sanctuary a double wedding, in which the fair-haired Mary and the gallant Frederick, and the dark-eyed Hazel and your most humble father and grandfather, played the important parts; whilst the ex-Queen and her daughters, together with the great Michael, lent right noble assistance. The priests prayed; the soft voices of the choir sang forth in tender harmony. We were blessed, and then walked from the chapel, with the sweet music lingering like a love kiss in our ears.

'Twas as we walked forth that Harleston and I both drew from our doublets—as we had foreplanned we would—the remembrances that the girls had given us long days before in the park at Windsor. These we returned to them, and they laughed and kissed them and re-gave them unto us.

Still have we both those tokens; and mine doth now lie before me as I pen these words. I take

it up and kiss it tenderly, and a tear drops down upon it.

Place that small glove, my children, in my grave and on my death-stilled heart when I am gone.

* * * * * *

The King forgot not the service we had rendered him upon that misty plain of Redmoor. A handsome wedding portion did he send to both the girls, although they did not need it. And when, later in his reign, he did acquire the habit of imposing heavy fines upon all of his subjects, both Harleston and myself escaped "as though by magic," as said some of our friends.

* * * * * *

And now the tale is told, and all that for me remains to do is sit with folded hands beside that dear grey head before the blazing fire, and talk away the winter's day. And in the hot summer's evenings stroll, with that same dear trusting hand upon mine arm, that for sixty years hath been there, beneath the old oaks of dear Bradley House. And when your dear cousins, Harleston, and your Uncle Frederick and Aunt Mary—as ye do call them—come over to spend with us a quiet evening, we all do sit upon the great lawn and talk the setting sun into his rest.

And now but a word of the great Michael, which ye all do love so dearly. Mayhap ye never

have heard the reason why we do not call him "Sir." It was at his own request that we did drop the distinction.

"Sure, yer honour," said he to me one day, "if ye playze, wouldst thou moind if Oi axed thee to not call me 'Sor'?"

"But for why, my good friend?"

"Uh! sure sor it doesn't sound roight to moy ears, and maketh me to fale a stranger to thee, sor. Playze, sor, give unto me back moy ould name and Oi'll fale more loike moysilf."

That, my dears, is the reason why the great man who hath ever lived with us, and carried ye all on his mighty shoulders, hath ever been known unto ye all as plain, old, faithful Michael.

And so, like the harmonious voices of a choir, we five are singing the last, sweet, trembling note. It is dying softly out; but with a tender, holy peacefulness.

THE END

NOTE.—Sir Walter Bradley's chronicle differs, in some parts, from the histories of the majority of the writers of his time. His most important contradictions of his contemporaries are:—

His description of the taking of Berwick—which place, the other authorities state, was beseiged for several weeks, by land and sea, before it fell.

The death of King Edward—which event, other chroniclers state, took place at Westminster, not Windsor.

The escape to France of the little Duke of York, who, it is more generally believed, was murdered with his brother, in the Tower.

On all other important points Sir Walter's statements are corroborated by his contemporaries.

K. M.